

INSPECTION REPORT

BECKERS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Braintree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114794

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Harvey

Lead inspector: Ray Morris

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th October 2003

Inspection number: 255463

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	287
School address:	Beckers Green Road Braintree Essex
Postcode:	CM7 3PR
Telephone number:	(01376) 322687
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lesley Bojko
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Beckers Green is a large, community primary school for boys and girls who are 4-11 years old. It has 306 pupils organised in 12 classes. Two reception classes cater for 40 children, 30 of whom attend part-time each morning. The school is situated on the eastern edge of Braintree, and the pupils live mainly on the surrounding estate. The school serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are less favourable than found nationally. The proportion of pupils receiving a free school meal is slightly above average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is below average, though there is range of ability within each age group that varies from year to year. Fifty-three pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, and four have statements to outline particularly challenging needs. The proportion of pupils needing additional support for learning is about average and the school also provides support for a number of pupils who have particular emotional as well as learning needs. Although few, the number of pupils who are not from white ethnic backgrounds is increasing and 10 of these are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. In 2003, the school gained a Healthy Schools Award for its health education programme, and an Education Extra Distinction Award for its daily programme of Vision Training which helps develop reading skills by improving pupils' visual perception.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11982	Mr Ray Morris	Lead inspector	Science, History, Geography
19653	Mrs Libby Dickson	Lay inspector	
23233	Miss Jo Cheadle	Team inspector	English, Design Technology, PE, Special Educational Needs, English as an Additional Language
30814	Mrs Elizabeth Coley	Team inspector	Mathematics, Information Technology, Music, Religious Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Beckers Green is an improving school whose current effectiveness is satisfactory. Many children join the school with below average skills in language and mathematics. Although children make **good** progress in their reception class, it is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. By the time they leave the school, although many reach the expected national standards in English, mathematics and science, a significant minority do not, so achievement overall is satisfactory. The new headteacher is providing **good** leadership, so, with the recent improvement in teaching, which is now **good**, standards are rising. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Strong leadership by the headteacher is raising standards.
- Pupils are very well cared for, and their social and moral development is very good.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The school does not ensure that the curriculum is always taught consistently in every class.
- Except in English and mathematics, pupils' progress is not monitored rigorously enough.
- Written comments on their work do not always make it clear what pupils must do next to improve.
- Governors are effective and take a keen interest in the school.

Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in 1997. Standards have been maintained in most subjects and the way the school cares for and supports vulnerable pupils is now even better than before. Almost all of the points identified for improvement at the last inspection have been dealt with. The new headteacher's realistic evaluation of the school has already identified the need to improve the curriculum still further. Recent improvements in the school's leadership, and the increased effectiveness of the governing body, are a firm foundation for further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	D	D	C	B
Mathematics	C	D	D	C
Science	C	D	E	D

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Whilst children make good progress in the Foundation Stage (Reception Class), and achieve well, this is not yet sustained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, by Year 6, although a significant minority of pupils are reaching their full capabilities, others are not. Recent improvements in teaching, and a stronger focus on raising standards, are steadily improving pupils' achievements but have not yet had sufficient time to make a significant difference. Therefore, pupils' current achievement overall is satisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their social skills and self-confidence so they make very good relationships and they behave well. The most vulnerable pupils are very well cared for. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are good in all parts of the school. The headteacher's programme of checking on the quality of teaching has brought about improvement and standards are beginning to rise because of this. Lessons are purposeful and conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers' use of questioning is good and helps pupils learn effectively. Staff build very good relationships with pupils and this ensures that they behave and work together well. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a very good contribution to teaching and learning. Together with teachers, they are adept at promoting good behaviour so that all pupils, including those with special learning needs, are fully included in lessons. Pupils' progress is not yet checked carefully enough in some subjects, but it is done well for those with special educational needs.

The school provides a **satisfactory curriculum** with a number of strengths that provide good opportunities for pupils to develop healthy personal and social attitudes. A particularly good resource is the recently purchased class set of laptop computers, which makes an effective contribution to standards in information and communication technology. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, including daily pre-school sessions to improve pupils' visual development. This work, along with that in health education, has resulted in the school receiving recognition at national level. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening and in aspects of science are less well promoted. The school does not yet ensure that the curriculum is followed consistently in all classes.

The school forges effective links with the community and with other educational establishments. A particularly noteworthy feature is the Family Literacy Projects run in conjunction with Braintree College and North Essex Adult Community College. Pupils' reports, however, do not always give parents a clear picture of what their child needs to do to improve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has established the clear vision needed to raise pupils' achievement. New senior staff have been appointed and standards in English and mathematics are beginning to rise as a result. Management of the school is satisfactory. It is well organised but oversight of the curriculum is not effective enough. Because they ensure they are properly trained for their role, the governors are effective and their contribution to the leadership of the school is good. They ensure they are well informed about the school's performance, seek to obtain the best possible value from the school's financial resources and actively pursue improvement with the headteacher and staff.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Considerable efforts are made to involve parents in the life of the school. As a result, they have very positive views of the school and express a high level of satisfaction. The great majority feel that their children are making good progress. Pupils enjoy school, and the many opportunities they have for taking responsibility, very much.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently in all classes.
- Check on pupils' progress more systematically so that work is best matched to their needs.
- Improve teachers' marking of pupils' work so that it helps pupils to know what they have to do to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**. When they start school, their language and mathematical skills are generally below average. At the end of reception, most have the level of skills expected at their age. This represents good achievement. However, achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, so that, by the time they leave the school, their standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly **average**. Although there are no significant differences in the achievements of any group of pupils at the school, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is more closely checked and their achievement is better as a result.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 improved in English and mathematics last year.
- Aspects of the results in national tests in mathematics at the end of Year 2 were well above those of similar schools.
- Children achieve well in the reception classes.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well.
- Standards in science are not improving as quickly as they are in other subjects.

Commentary

1. Although overall standards are below average when children enter the **Foundation Stage**, it was clear during the inspection that the majority are likely to achieve the national Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in the reception class because of a stimulating curriculum and good teaching. Even though speaking and listening is less well developed than their other language skills, all children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.1 (16.1)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	12.8 (13.9)	14.8 (14.4)
mathematics	15.5 (16.5)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The school's pattern of national test results, at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, is complex and has often depended as much on the attainment level of a group of pupils as the quality of the teaching or the best endeavours of the school's leadership. The considerable staff changes in the last three years, including the death of a teacher in a road accident, will also have had an effect. However, results in the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 rose in all three subjects to match the average for all schools in reading and mathematics, although they were still below average in writing. In 2003, the results fell again compared with all schools, but maintained their level compared with similar schools in writing and mathematics.

3. The school has clear evidence to show that while many pupils did not attain the expected level in the 2003 reading and writing tests, their achievements were at least satisfactory. The group consisted of a larger than average proportion of pupils who needed particular support for their special educational needs.

4. The 2003 test results in mathematics also dipped below the national average. Although fewer pupils achieved the higher Level 3, the very good support the school provides for special needs pupils meant that the proportion of pupils achieving the target Level 2 for seven year olds was above

the national average and well above the average for similar schools. For these children this represents very good achievement in comparison with their attainment on entry to the school.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.9 (26.3)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	26.0 (26.1)	27.0 (26.7)
science	26.9 (27.8)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 6, more pupils achieved the expected level in English than in previous years. Results overall were similar to the national average, including those pupils attaining the higher Level 5. This represents satisfactory achievement. There was a significant improvement in the comparison with similar schools for pupils attaining Level 5 and this was well above average. This sharp improvement for higher attaining pupils is the result of teaching that provides greater challenge for them.

6. Although the 2003 Year 6 results in mathematics overall remained below the national average, they improved in comparison with similar schools where they rose above the average for pupils attaining the target Level 4, and were average for those attaining Level 5. Achievement was satisfactory.

7. While the school has rightly concentrated its efforts on raising standards in English and mathematics, pupils achieved less well in science in 2003 when results were generally well below those nationally and those of similar schools. This lack of improvement is also partly because the school has only recently identified an underlying weakness in the pupils' ability to plan and carry out their own scientific investigations, an aspect of the work that has increasingly featured in the national tests.

8. The good teaching observed throughout the school during the inspection and the improving quality of pupils' work indicate that the majority of pupils in the current Year 6 will reach standards in line with national expectations by the time they leave.

9. The headteacher and governors have been single minded in their efforts to raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics. Standards in all other subjects inspected, meanwhile, are at least average. Strengths exist, particularly where teaching was good, such as in RE and music, and in information communication technology where good resources are available.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are **good** and they behave **well** in lessons. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **good**.

Main strengths and areas for improvement

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and take an active interest in their learning.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and contributes to the very good relationships within the school.
- More could be done to promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Commentary

10. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, during lessons and around the school, are good. They respond well to the staff's expectations of how they should behave. They show interest in their work, listen well to teachers, and are eager to be involved in class activities. Their good behaviour

contributes to the purposeful working atmosphere, enabling them to make good progress in many lessons. In the playground they play together harmoniously and enjoy each other's company.

11. A number of pupils have personal behavioural difficulties, but because of the skilful management of teachers and teaching assistants, this does not cause undue interruption to the flow of lessons. Where there are lapses in conduct, pupils know how seriously this is viewed. Teachers rarely have to break off teaching to check pupils' behaviour so little time is wasted through disciplining them. The school had a high number of fixed term exclusions last year. These mainly related to incidents involving a very small number of pupils, most of whom have now left the school.

12. As a result of the school's strong provision for their moral and social development pupils grow in confidence and maturity. The consistent implementation of effective procedures for promoting good behaviour helps to achieve a secure understanding of right and wrong. Teachers and other adults set good role models and treat the pupils and one another with respect and courtesy. Pupils, in turn, are well mannered to each other and to adults, including visitors. Pupils are encouraged to work and play together in pairs and groups and, as a consequence, develop the skills necessary to build constructive relationships with others. Through the house system they gain experience of friendly competitiveness and teamwork. Many older pupils learn how to take responsibility as house captains and playground friends, and a significant number train as 'peer mediators', helping to resolve any disputes at playtime. Year 6 pupils enjoy having their own 'common room' for which they take responsibility. Pupils respect their elected school council which is serious and enthusiastic about its responsibilities. The school council has taken a significant role in improving the playground facilities, and was instrumental in developing the 'peer mediator' scheme.

13. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are some opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of living in a multi-cultural society, but these are not extensive. By studying artists from western and other cultures, pupils learn to appreciate a range of artistic styles. Displays around the school of artwork, food from different parts of the world and artefacts from other cultures help to raise pupils' awareness of other cultures and lifestyles. In religious education they learn about the values and beliefs of others, and geography and history topics such as St Lucia and the Victorians give pupils an understanding of different societies. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies and religious education lessons enable pupils to reflect on issues such as 'thinking of others', and times when all the pupils in a class gather in a circle to discuss their feelings enable them to think about particular personal issues. Pupils are generally happy to express their own feelings and listen with respect to those of others.

14. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly, and attendance is generally above the national average of 94 per cent. Last year the annual attendance rate was lower than usual owing to the erratic attendance of four pupils who are no longer at the school. The school monitors attendance conscientiously, making first day calls to parents who do not inform the school of their child's absence, and using the services of the Educational Welfare Officer to deal with cases of poor attendance. All parents are discouraged from taking their children on holiday during term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	School data	0.3
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	289	62	0
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1		
Black or Black British – African	4		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. After an unsettled period of several years, good leadership and management by the headteacher and governors have now established high expectations so that teaching is good, although these have not yet had sufficient time to make a significant difference to standards. Parents, staff and pupils benefit from very good relationships. Pupils are well cared for and supported and those with special educational needs make good progress. The school has yet to ensure that the curriculum and the assessment of pupils' progress are effective enough to promote better achievement and higher standards.

Teaching and learning

Teaching throughout the school is **good**. For pupils with special educational needs it is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide clear explanations, use questions effectively and conduct lessons at a brisk pace.
- Strategies for promoting good behaviour are well used so all pupils play a full part in lessons.
- Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to teaching and learning.
- Assessment and marking are not being rigorously or consistently used to identify individual pupils' achievement and to set and check on targets for improvement.
- Teaching of speaking and listening has weaknesses.

Commentary

15. Teaching in lessons is consistently good in all parts of the school, with very good examples seen in some junior classes. Its quality is regularly checked by the headteacher and senior staff. Lessons are generally well prepared and teachers are clear about what is to be learned. Pupils are told what they are going to learn at the outset and, in the most effective lessons, are continually reminded of this so that they remain focussed on what they are supposed to be learning. The final few minutes of the lesson are devoted to discussing what and how well they have learnt, although this was an aspect of the teaching that was less well developed and not seen consistently in all classes. These principles were demonstrated in a Year 6 design and technology lesson when the teacher introduced the task sufficiently well for the pupils themselves to decide what it was they had to do in order to achieve the lesson objective. Not only was her explanation clear, but she also demonstrated one of the skills to be learnt, thus providing a clear example on which pupils could model their own efforts. Regular reminders throughout, combined with good resources and a supporting display of pictures, made this an effective lesson. The final part of the lesson, used to discuss what had been learnt, was well managed although hampered by the difficulty that many pupils have in expressing themselves clearly.

16. The school has identified this weakness in pupils' speaking and listening ability and is planning to tackle it in the coming year. Currently, opportunities are not always seized in lessons to help pupils improve this aspect of their learning. When they are, the action taken is simple but effective. For example, a Year 2 teacher explained that the word 'nicked' is "not one that we use in school" and supplied a better example in a full sentence for the pupil concerned to repeat. A significant barrier exists to teachers improving standards of speaking and listening: the open plan design of the infant classrooms means that even a normal level of noise makes listening a challenge for adults and pupils alike.

17. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers. They are well briefed about the lesson, anticipate the needs of the teacher and pupils, and provide very clear information to teachers about the achievements of pupils with whom they work. This was demonstrated in a Year 4 mathematics lesson when the teaching assistant assiduously gathered information about pupils' involvement in the first part of the lesson and relayed this to the teacher. Pupils she worked with in the main part of the lesson received the support needed to complete their work and, in the final whole class discussion, she spontaneously wrote calculations on the whiteboard so that all pupils could 'see' the numbers the teacher was talking about. Her work contributed to the overall good achievement in this lesson. Because they are well trained and supported by the special needs co-ordinator, they are also adept at managing challenging behaviour. As a result, occasional displays of unacceptable behaviour are swiftly and effectively dealt with so that there is minimal interference with the work of the whole class.

18. Although the progress of pupils with special educational needs is regularly assessed and the next steps in their learning planned, this is not generally done as well for other pupils. The school is using a computer package to check the progress of groups of pupils, especially in English and mathematics. When teachers identify poor progress they modify their teaching so that results improve, but this has yet to be done as effectively in science and other subjects. Teachers have identified the aspects of English and mathematics in which different groups of pupils need to improve. Although they have begun using this information to set learning targets for individual pupils, these are not yet expressed in terms that pupils can easily understand. As a result, pupils do not yet find these helpful in understanding what they need to do next to improve. A useful policy has been prepared specifying how pupils' work should be marked to provide them with helpful information about what they can do to improve but it is not yet being followed consistently by all staff.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	4 (9%)	26 (61%)	13 (30%)			

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.

The curriculum

The school provides **satisfactory** learning opportunities that meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the agreed syllabus for religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good.
- Resources for information communication technology (ICT), mathematics and science are good.
- Learning for children in the reception classes is well organised.
- The development of pupils' speaking and listening skills and their investigative skills in science are not planned for well enough.
- Pupils in some classes, and some for whom English is an additional language, do not always have the same access to the curriculum as others.

Commentary

19. Learning opportunities and support for pupils with special educational needs have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The most impressive aspect of the provision is the very well organised and effective use of teaching assistants. A particular strength is the work they do with pupils who have behaviour or emotional difficulties. The school makes flexible, supportive and successful arrangements for special needs work, which enables pupils to achieve well.

20. The school provides well for pupils' personal and social development and encourages a sense of citizenship through the work provided. A well planned personal and social education programme allows pupils good opportunities to discuss topics such as bullying, relationships and the environment. They contribute sensitively to these discussions. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils considered the feelings of a girl visiting her family in the Gambia for the first time. Pupils gain a strong awareness of the needs of others and the importance of caring for the environment. The school raises substantial amounts for a range of charities. Visits from their representatives, 'The Recycling Bus' and speakers on sustainable development have also been used to enrich the curriculum.

21. Resources are generally satisfactory, and good for mathematics, science and ICT where laptop computers are used in all classrooms. The school has a mix of open-plan and partitioned accommodation, which is of a satisfactory quality overall. Younger pupils working in the open-plan area, however, are disadvantaged because the level of noise and distraction affects their concentration.

22. The school improvement plan appropriately highlights the need to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, but teachers do not always take account of this identified priority to ensure that, when they are planning lessons, they include sufficient opportunities for the development of these skills. Similarly, science work has not concentrated sufficiently on the improvement of pupils' investigative skills and this, too, is a priority recently identified by the school.

23. Overall, the equality of access to the curriculum is satisfactory, but some pupils' opportunities to learn are affected because those whose families do not speak English are not always given enough support. In addition, some teachers do not follow the planned curriculum consistently enough.

24. The school has a growing number of pupils who are learning to speak English. These pupils are identified appropriately and helped in class. However, the specific needs of pupils who are beginning to learn English are not always met by the work that is planned for them and there is no specialist help provided. This affects the progress of older pupils in particular, who have less time to improve their language skills before leaving the school. Moreover, there are some pupils who speak English well, but whose families do not speak English fluently. The needs of these pupils are not identified and insufficient help is given to them to ensure that they are achieving as well as they can.

25. The school has recently completed appropriate planning for all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In general, teachers make good use of these plans to organise suitable work for most groups of pupils. However, pupils in some classes do not always study the same aspects of the curriculum as pupils of the same age in another class. This is not only the case when there are mixed-age classes, but also in year groups where there are two, single-age, parallel groups. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils in the Year 4 class, were taught quite different aspects of the curriculum to Year 4 pupils in the mixed-age class. The school is confident that all pupils experience the same learning opportunities by the end of the process. The current arrangements, however, do not allow teachers to compare pupils' progress in a particular aspect of learning across a year group, or to ensure that skills and knowledge are taught in the right order at the best time. Such inconsistencies were noted at the time of the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The overall quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very caring environment.
- Effective policies promote pupils' welfare well.
- Assessment procedures are not yet effective.

Commentary

26. All adults in the school show concern for the welfare of pupils, and parents acknowledge this with the strong agreement shown in their questionnaires for the positive way in which their children are looked after in school. The very good relationships between staff and pupils also help to create a comfortable and cheerful atmosphere where pupils feel valued and supported, and know that their views will be taken seriously. Staff make every possible effort to get to know their pupils well so that each child receives the help he or she needs. Pupils are encouraged to share their concerns and any child who has an academic, personal or medical problem is treated sensitively. Counselling sessions are arranged for those who the school feels would benefit from this service, and the school is about to join the Pyramid Trust, an organisation which provides an after-school club to help raise pupils' self-esteem.

27. Child protection procedures are in place and staff have been appropriately trained in their use. Health and safety checks of the premises and equipment are carried out regularly. Staff trained in first aid look after pupils who are ill, and arrangements for dealing with accidents, should they occur, are clearly set out. Fire drills are carried out each term. The school has received the 'Healthy School's Award' standard, and is now working towards the advanced level for this initiative. This heightens pupils' awareness and understanding of healthy living and personal safety. At playtimes, pupils are well supervised and have good relationships with midday supervisors.

28. Parents confirm that the school has good arrangements for new pupils. The Foundation Stage leader visits local playgroups and sees all parents before their children start school. Pupils start on a 'mornings only' basis and build up to staying for the day. Parents are provided with a helpful introductory 'Welcome to School' booklet. Effective arrangements are in place with the local secondary school to which most pupils transfer and pupils spend two days there before they join the school. Additional support is given to those who might find the transition from primary to secondary education difficult.

29. The school makes considerable effort to seek pupils' views through a very effective School Council. Pupils are also encouraged to share their opinions or concerns through regular Circle Time sessions. At the weekly 'celebration assembly' individual achievements are recognised and rewarded.

30. Weaknesses in marking and the lack of formal assessment limit teachers' capacity to provide pupils with clear guidance on how they might improve their work. The school keeps a careful track of progress made by pupils with special education needs through regular reviews carried out by the special needs co-ordinator. However, information is not yet used effectively by all teachers to gauge the progress and plan for the learning of other pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **good** partnership with parents. There are **good** links with local schools, colleges and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold very positive views about the school.
- The school tries hard to involve parents in its work and keep them well informed, but some are not very responsive.
- The school forges effective links with the community.
- Pupils' reports do not always give parents a clear picture of what their child needs to do to improve.

Commentary

31. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides. Those who attended the meeting before the inspection were very supportive of the school and had few concerns. They have confidence in the staff, and they feel that the teaching is good. They say that their children are treated fairly and expected to work hard and do their best.

32. The school works hard to forge links with parents which will support pupils' learning. Many parents help their children by hearing them read regularly at home and encouraging them to do homework. There is very good attendance at parent consultation meetings, although attendance at meetings to discuss the curriculum has often been disappointing. A few parents help in the school, for example by running the second hand uniform stall and book shop. The school has a parent-teacher association run by a small but dedicated committee. They organise both fundraising and social events, which are well supported by parents. A number of parents benefit from the Family Literacy project and Vision Training initiative which the school runs. These provide parents with valuable opportunities for shared learning and help them understand how their children develop.

33. Parents are regularly consulted on school matters, and their views are taken into account to bring about improvement. For example, recent questionnaires have covered topics such as pupils' behaviour, and links with parents and the wider community. In response to parental views, the school has adapted its rewards and sanctions system and is reviewing ways to improve school reports. From this term, parents are invited in to the weekly celebration assemblies. There are clear procedures for dealing with the small number of formal complaints which the school receives.

34. Information provided for parents is good overall. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well-presented and contain helpful and relevant information. A particularly good feature is the weekly newsletter sent out by the headteacher which keeps parents well-informed of current and future events and class activities. Annual reports are satisfactory. In the best examples, teachers provide helpful targets for the next steps in pupils' learning, but not all reports provide guidance for parents on what their child needs to do to improve.

35. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, with the school having established good links with local churches and organisations. Local retired business people come into school to help deliver modules of the school's citizenship programme and representatives from Christian Youth Outreach come in twice a term to deliver assemblies. The Blackwater Housing Association has provided funding for the peer mediation scheme. Links through the governors have resulted in a donation from the Prudential and support from Ford, which is printing the governors'

annual report to parents. Pupils have visited a variety of local places of interest including the Colne Valley Railway, Chelmer and Blackwater Canal, Hedingham Castle and Colchester Zoo. Visitors to the school have included the local police liaison officer, Redtail Falconry and a representative from Guide Dogs for the Blind. The school takes part in the district sports competition, rounders rally and football tournament, and representatives from Colchester United run after-school sessions. Every Monday the school invites elderly people from the community to attend a luncheon club, and last year, around Christmas time, a group of pupils sang carols outside Sainsburys.

36. Productive links with the local secondary school include mentoring of younger pupils by Year 11 students. A counselling service is also provided by the 'Sycamore Trust', which sought government funding for it on the school's behalf. The school has developed good links with local colleges. Two Family Literacy projects, which have been taking place at the school since the time of the last inspection, are sponsored by Braintree College and by the North Essex Adult Community College, which is also funding a forthcoming 'Gamelan day', that the school intends will stimulate creative writing. The school receives students on work experience and training practice from Braintree College.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and governors provide **good** leadership, and management of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the head teacher is strongly focused on raising standards.
- The governing body makes a good contribution to the work of the school.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.
- The success of senior staff in raising academic standards is inconsistent.
- Systems for assessment are newly in place, so their impact cannot be evaluated yet.

Commentary

37. The leadership of the headteacher is good and, together with the governors, she shows clear vision. Since her appointment, she has built an effective staff team. Many of the senior managers are relatively new in post, and their leadership is satisfactory overall, because they have not yet had enough time in post to make a sufficient improvement in standards. The school is currently focused on raising achievement in English, mathematics and science, and standards are rising as a result. However, because the school's systems for the detailed checking of pupils' progress are relatively new, the benefits of knowing exactly what pupils can do, and so setting work that will raise their achievement, have yet to be capitalised upon. Senior staff share a common purpose, morale is good and they make an appropriate contribution to the school's aims and objectives.

38. The governing body provides good leadership for the school. Each member has a clear role to play in both challenging and supporting various aspects of school life. For example, the governor taking responsibility for ICT monitors the use of resources, while the numeracy governor meets with the numeracy coordinator on a regular basis to discuss standards and progress. This has contributed to good achievement in these subjects. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although they have not identified where there are pupils, for example, those who speak English as an additional language, who are not achieving as well as they might, and have not allocated resources to develop their achievement. The governing body ensures that it fulfils its statutory duties, and improves its own performance through extensive training, both as a group and as individuals.

39. The effectiveness of management is satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is realistic, and its improvement plan outlines appropriate priorities for development. Clear policies and procedures have been established. As yet, however, there are variations in the way they are followed. This makes it difficult to ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are being steadily built. Staff development has recently been focused on English, mathematics and science, and targets agreed during the performance management of staff are linked to pupils' achievement. Staff and governors work hard to ensure that children with special educational needs are well catered for, and the management and leadership of this department, including the deployment of teaching assistants, are very good. The school provides good support for its new teachers. The deployment of resources is discussed with senior staff and governors and finances are managed efficiently. As a result, and taking into account the pupils' achievement, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Particular aids and barriers to raising achievement

40. The strong lead given by the head teacher and the governors is a significant aid to raising achievement. It has established a productive climate for learning, in which all pupils are given an equal chance to learn to their full potential. The school's realistic self-evaluation is also helping improvement; the head teacher has identified clear priorities and is addressing them systematically.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	874,991
Total expenditure	811,942
Expenditure per pupil	2,537

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	84,874
Balance carried forward to the next	23,048

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Reception classes is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is mostly good.
- Management of the Foundation Stage is good.
- A caring and secure environment ensures pupils settle well and enjoy learning.
- The curriculum is broad and stimulating.
- Relationships with parents are good and support children's learning.
- Information about children's progress is not always used effectively to guide teaching.
- Insufficient attention is devoted to developing children's speaking skills.

Commentary

41. This year, for the first time all children entered school in September, the younger children attending part time in the mornings. One class accommodates the winter and spring born children; the other class accommodates the youngest children. Numbers in both classes are relatively low and staff are used effectively to promote a good range of learning activities. The change in admissions practice has been effectively managed so that children settle in well and make good early progress.

42. Despite overall standards being below average on entry to school, it was evident during the inspection that the great majority of pupils are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in the reception classes. Children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. This is because the quality of teaching is good overall and teachers provide a good range of learning activities while providing clear examples of what is expected. Staff are very careful to ensure children's security and emotional well-being, as well as generally encouraging independence and co-operative behaviour.

43. The curriculum is well balanced across the six areas of learning. Teachers ensure activities are often practical and involve first hand experience. Appropriate emphasis has been given to working with parents, through meetings explaining the curriculum, initial interviews, ongoing dialogue in home-school diaries and informal links. This really helps to support children's early learning. An initial assessment is made of children's skills and understanding, and staff are also recording progress against the Early Learning Goals. However, assessment information is not used consistently to guide the planning of activities. Children's speaking and listening skills are below average on entry and, although good efforts are made to encourage appropriate listening, opportunities to develop children's speaking are missed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths

- Relationships are good.
- Children are effectively helped to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Commentary

44. Children are interested in their work and play and are well motivated because activities are stimulating and are often based on first hand experience. In assembly they show that they can maintain concentration and sit quietly, because the teacher uses a range of strategies very effectively (e.g. a persona doll) to involve them in discussion and story. Children are mostly happy and interact well both with adults and each other. Opportunities such as snack time are used to encourage appropriate behaviour and independence. Children are given choices and can explain their preferences. Staff encourage them to develop independence in such self-help areas as changing for PE. They are well taught to manage their personal hygiene. Careful attention is given to understanding individual differences and to teaching right and wrong behaviour. Children are encouraged to clear away after activities. In general, a nurturing environment is provided in which children feel secure and excited about learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff make learning about books and reading enjoyable.
- Listening skills are taught very effectively by all staff.
- Opportunities to help pupils improve their speaking are sometimes missed.

Commentary

45. Children's achievement is satisfactory and they are likely to reach average standards in all aspects of language and literacy acquisition except for speaking. Many have below average speaking and listening skills on entry to the school but are taught to pay attention and concentrate on what adults are saying very effectively. Some opportunities to develop clearer and more articulate speech are missed when adults limit the opportunities for discussion in activities. For example, a teacher writing down a child's brief statements about what his hands could do did not take the opportunity to help him improve by giving him time to explain his ideas or rephrasing his statements in a complete sentence.

46. Children are acquiring very positive attitudes to books through assemblies and reading activities in class. Children follow text showing one to one correspondence with words and recognise some words by sight. They know that print carries meaning and that we read from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. They turn pages appropriately and discuss a simple story, including devising their own version of a story told in pictures, showing that they can sequence a narrative. Children are being taught to recognise letters by name and sound and are beginning to be able to hear and say initial sounds in words. In some practical activities, opportunities are taken to extend children's vocabularies. In a cooking activity, for instance, the teacher focused on the names of the various implements and the processes involved, such as sieving, and the texture of the mixture. The classroom environments promote literacy through display and a wide range of activity. Children read at home and parent comments in home-school diaries show interest and pride in children's early literacy progress.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a good range of interesting opportunities to help them learn.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for the teaching of number.
- The teaching of number is not informed by teachers' initial assessments.
- Writing things down is sometimes emphasised at the expense of understanding.

Commentary

47. Children are likely to reach average standards in their awareness of number. They are achieving well. They recognise many of the numerals up to nine and the majority say number names in order to ten. A good proportion of children count reliably up to ten, matching number names with objects. Several show awareness of shapes such as the hexagon and some of its properties. Children with special educational needs achieve well. They recognise some numerals, including ten, and count with support from a teaching assistant, who uses questions well to encourage awareness of the idea of “how many more”. Teachers employ a range of teaching strategies so that, for example, children can experience the shape of the number five, by modelling in dough, chalking outside on the paving and printing patterns on outlines of the number. Children are absorbed by these activities which reinforce their number recognition and counting skills.

48. There is an over-emphasis, however, on recording and recognition. At this early stage, insufficient emphasis is being given to practical activities involving counting and simple calculations. Written tasks are also not always carefully matched to individuals needs which indicates that teachers do not use information from assessment to plan these activities as well as they might.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths

- They use the computer to draw simple pictures, using several of the tools associated with a drawing program with confidence.
- They identify seasonal change and its characteristics. For instance, they talk about autumn, falling leaves and the change to winter. They identify the typical colours in the environment.
- They investigate materials and processes through their senses. For instance, during a cooking activity they discussed the sticky nature and sweet smell of the mixture. During this activity, they also learned about the correct tools for various cooking activities. They are also learning to work hygienically and safely. Less able pupils are excited and interested in these practical activities and achieve well.

Commentary

49. During the inspection, it was not possible to see the full range of activity encompassed in this area. However, children are making good progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strength

- Teaching provides good opportunities to develop a wide range of physical skills.

Commentary

50. Children attain average standards. They move with control and the great majority show an awareness of space. They are learning to move in a variety of ways: marching, skipping and also balancing. The majority show that they are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area. Some can move in time. Good achievement is promoted through well-paced teaching and the demonstrations and involvement of both teacher and teaching assistant. In a PE lesson, for example, children learnt quickly how to run around the hall without colliding with each other because both demonstrated how it should be done. Sensitive support is given to younger children, which gives them confidence. Teachers ensure fine motor skills are developed through a range of activity in all areas of learning, such as sticking, drawing, cutting and printing and also use these as opportunities to encourage co-operative activity and good listening skills. Staff encourage children to record using pencils and a range of drawing media suited to their age and stage of development. They show rapidly developing control in such activities.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strength

- A variety of good quality opportunities are provided to help children learn.

Commentary

51. Children attain average standards. They explore colour, pattern and texture, for instance through printing and painting. They can name some of the primary colours and are learning to select appropriate colours and materials for work on seasons. Staff also develop creative skills in other areas of learning, such as mathematics, so that children are able to explore patterns by printing and number formation through modelling. Children have encountered the work of the artist Seurat and used his technique in their own work. In physical activities children show they are able to mime and use their imaginations. In outdoor play they also enjoy role-play activities. Teachers use resources from other cultures, such as Hindu Divali hand painting, as a stimulus for artistic activity. Good opportunities are provided for the use of a range of creative materials. No music lessons were observed during the inspection, but children join in well with simple rhymes, rhythms and songs as part of assembly, and physical and mathematical activities.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The overall provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 are improving.
- Teaching has strengths and is encouraging good progress in many lessons.
- Speaking skills are below average.
- Challenge for higher attaining pupils in Year 2 is not always good enough.
- Learning opportunities are not consistent across year groups.

Commentary

52. Standards in reading and writing in the current Year 6 are average and there is a good proportion of pupils who are being well challenged to reach higher levels. Some of these pupils struggle with handwriting skills and so, while content and creativity may be of a good standard, presentation is not of the required quality to achieve above average results. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall.

53. Standards in the current Year 2 are broadly average in reading and writing, but there are a significant proportion of pupils who need substantial support to make good progress. While work is generally well matched to pupils' abilities, encouraging satisfactory achievement, challenge for the higher attaining pupils is not always good enough. This means that this group of pupils can lose interest in their work and sometimes their behaviour deteriorates. This affects their learning in lessons.

54. When children start school, their spoken language skills are below average. Throughout the school standards remain below average and, despite the fact that this aspect of English has been highlighted for development, there is still a lack of attention given to improving skills in lessons. Pupils are not often enough given opportunities to speak with each other, prepare a spoken contribution, or to learn about appropriate ways to speak in a given situation. There were examples of planned opportunities during the inspection. For example, in Year 5, pupils used role-play to explore

characters from 'Danny the Champion of the World'. Even so, there is not enough focus on correcting and improving speech, so when pupils make contributions, they use inaccurate sentence construction, grammar and pronunciation. Teachers recognise this, but do not often model the correct way so that pupils can learn from an accurate example. Many pupils do not understand that, while local dialect and use of grammar is acceptable in many situations, there is a standard form of spoken language that needs to be used in others.

55. During the inspection the quality of teaching seen in lessons was good. This improvement is recent, however, which is why standards are still average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and now has clear strengths. Although weaknesses in the challenge presented to some pupils and the development of speaking skills exist, teaching is still good overall. This is because lessons are well planned, interesting and promote good progress for the majority of pupils. The quality of teaching is now more consistent and this is a positive pointer for future improvement. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6. Teachers know their pupils well, have good relationships with them and plan work that focuses on their main weaknesses to ensure that their achievements are at least satisfactory. Better analysis of pupils' past performance is supporting teachers in understanding the steps that need to be taken to move pupils forward more quickly, helping some to achieve well. The co-ordinator for English is a positive role model for other teachers, because her own practice is of a high standard. A strength of the lessons observed was the good links made between English and other subjects, such as history and ICT. These links made learning relevant and meaningful to pupils, ensuring that they made good progress.

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Planning and resources are efficiently organised and the co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There are inconsistencies in the delivery of the English curriculum that result in highs and lows in pupils' progress in different year groups throughout the school. As the co-ordinator, she has not yet convinced all staff of the need to follow the planned programmes of study at an appropriate time and with suitable challenge in order to ensure consistently good progress and better achievement overall. She is fully aware of this and is working with senior managers to improve the situation.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects. Effective links are made with ICT, and spelling and presentation are improved in this way. The use and development of reading and speaking skills is not as effective. In some lessons, teachers do not make the most of asking pupils to read aloud or explain their ideas fully. For example, in religious education and music lessons observed, teachers read passages to the pupils, rather than allowing them to participate by reading for the class.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Management and leadership of the subject are good.
- Procedures for the assessment of pupils' learning are weak and are not supporting pupils' achievement.
- Little evidence was found of maths being used in other subjects.

Commentary

58. Standards are average overall across the school, and achievement is satisfactory. No difference was noted in classes between the achievement of boys and girls. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because of good support from their teachers and the

effective deployment of teaching assistants. Pupils' work covers all four areas of mathematics, but work on number is predominant.

59. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and they use questioning well. It is made clear to pupils at the beginning of lessons what they are going to learn, and the final part is used to discuss and confirm what they have learnt. The pace of lessons is brisk and pupils concentrate throughout. Teachers make good use of ICT to illustrate ideas. Learning is good as a result, and good relationships are established between staff and pupils. In a Year 6 lesson which had many of these strengths, a boy demonstrated at the end of the lesson that he understood how to reduce fractions to their simplest terms by offering his own example of 99/198 being equal to 1/2. Occasionally, an opportunity was missed to develop pupils' understanding. For example, in a lesson where pupils were learning to convert from imperial to metric measures, the practical application of these facts was ignored. The open plan classrooms used by pupils in Years 1 to 3 are not helpful to the learning process, as the level of noise means that pupils sometimes find it difficult to hear what their teacher is saying. This is a particular problem when pupils are expected to listen to each other.

60. Leadership and management of the subject are good, the well-informed numeracy governor provides both challenge and support, and standards are beginning to improve. The headteacher and co-ordinator regularly check the quality of lessons so teaching is improving. However, assessment is still not strong enough for teachers to be sufficiently aware of pupils' existing skills so they do not always set challenging work. Some inconsistency occurs across the school in marking and in the annual written report to parents when it is not always made clear what the pupil has to do next to improve. Resources are good, as is the accommodation for Years 4 to 6.

61. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Little evidence was found of mathematics being used in other subjects. Some appropriate examples were found in science, such as using a line graph to show how the length of a wire affected the electrical current flowing through it.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Increasing use is being made of ICT in teaching the subject.
- Resources are good.
- Pupils' have had insufficient opportunity to carry out practical investigations.
- The use of information about pupils' learning is not used effectively.

Commentary

63. Work seen during the inspection indicates that overall standards in science are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Evidence from pupils' work and lesson observations shows teaching to be satisfactory overall, but examples of better teaching were seen in Years 1 and 2 and very good teaching seen in Year 5. This is an improvement on the last inspection, although the better teaching is not yet sufficiently well established to raise standards significantly.

64. The best teaching was seen when the teacher had a secure understanding of the science being taught, explained the purpose of the lesson clearly and used the final few minutes of the lesson to confirm and consolidate what pupils had learnt. Pupils' questions were used as opportunities to extend their understanding because they were often met with a further question from the teacher which involved the whole class in seeking an answer. The question "Why do wires in a parallel circuit meet?" posed by a pupil in a Year 5 lesson was answered by an invitation for the whole class to

consider the mathematical definition of parallel alongside a photograph and a circuit diagram. Practical involvement was also an effective aid to Year 2 pupils learning about joints in the skeleton when they were invited to scratch their heads without bending their arms. Not only did the activity amply illustrate the point of the lesson, it also secured pupils' interest so that the whole class was engaged in the learning.

65. The subject benefits from good resources. Effective use was being made of a computer in a Year 6 lesson to measure and illustrate with a line graph the contrasting rates at which different kinds of batteries lost their charge. This enabled pupils to consider not only the scientific process but also discuss the practical implications of what they had learnt. Varied and good quality materials for pupils to use to make electrical circuits were also a significant factor in their learning observed in lessons and in their books.

66. The recently revised scheme of work now provides a comprehensive plan for covering all the elements to be taught, and the co-ordinator has rightly acknowledged the need to check that the knowledge, skills and understanding are being taught consistently throughout the school. The school has identified past weaknesses in teaching pupils to carry out practical investigations as a key factor which has prevented standards rising as much as they might. Although steps are now being taken to improve this aspect of science, the guidance is not being consistently applied in all classes. The subject leader checks that pupils progress from year to year but the information is not yet sufficiently detailed to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to bring about faster improvement. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision for Information and Communication Technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Recently purchased laptop computers enhance pupils' learning.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about ICT.
- The use of information about pupils' learning is not used effectively.

Commentary

67. Standards in ICT at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average, both in the lessons observed and in the examples of pupils' work seen by inspectors. Pupils are achieving well. Those in Years 1 and 2 successfully log on, log off and use the mouse carefully and accurately to drag clothes across the screen to dress a Teddy. Year 3 and 4 pupils successfully use the stamp tool to repeat patterns for the design of wrapping paper, and Year 6 pupils create a spreadsheet to itemise their shopping and its cost.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers possess good subject knowledge, and their demonstrations, together with clear instructions and explanations, are used effectively to support pupils' learning. In the lessons seen, pupils were also used to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding so that their peers could learn from these. Good support was offered to all pupils by both teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils collaborated well together on the whole, although there were moments when one partner in a pair dominated proceedings and prevented the other from developing skills to the same degree.

69. Leadership and management of the subject are good. An enthusiastic and capable subject leader has written medium term plans in line with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work. The new laptop computers together with various software packages have provided good resources for the school. The ICT governor closely monitors the work of the department. The subject co-ordinator has provided in service training for all teaching staff and this has added to their confidence in teaching this subject. It is hoped that training can be provided for teaching assistants in

the near future. The school is just beginning to use a commercial program for checking pupils' progress, but it is too early to evaluate its effect on pupils' achievement.

70. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Improvements include better resources, more use of ICT across the curriculum, more effective planning, and improved teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. Displays featuring the subject include word processing of poetry written by Year 6 pupils, and information downloaded from the Internet about the London Blitz as part of studies in history. Evidence was also seen in lessons, where Year 6 pupils compared the power of batteries by using a data logger program on the computer and projecting the graph created onto the whiteboard, and those in Years 3 and 4 used ICT to compare the index in a book with a website search box during a literacy lesson.

HUMANITIES

One lesson was observed in religious education and three assemblies attended. Only one history lesson was observed and, in both subjects, a little of pupils' work from the previous year was seen. This provided insufficient evidence to evaluate the overall quality of teaching and learning, standards reached and pupils' achievement. However, inspectors talked to pupils and teachers, and teachers' plans were scrutinised so that a secure judgement could be made about the school's provision in these subjects. Geography was not inspected.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strength

- Varied resources are used effectively.

Commentary

72. In the year 5 lesson observed, standards were average and pupils achieved well. The teacher's subject knowledge was good. Pupils were able to empathise with the characters in the story of David and Goliath, and draw meaningful conclusions from the story. Each pupil had their own copy of The Children's Bible and eagerly followed the story as it was dramatically read by the teacher. This lost opportunity for the pupils to develop their reading skills by reading aloud to their peers was the only flaw in an otherwise very good lesson. In their written work, pupils made observations about David the man, mentioning characteristics such as brave, truthful, determined and fearless. Very good questioning by the teacher, which led into a discussion about people's qualities, made this a very effective learning experience for the pupils and contributed well to their spiritual, moral and social education.

73. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The school's scheme of work has been written to follow the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is currently being revised and the subject action plan has rightly identified staff training as a priority so that the changes can be properly introduced. Appropriate plans are in place to strengthen teaching about other faiths as well as Christianity and to implement procedures for checking pupils' progress and keeping a record of what they have learnt.

74. Each of the assemblies observed provided opportunities for pupils to reflect on the spiritual and moral content. Team work was presented through the subject of rock climbing, and pupils were led in their thinking to consider how each person relies on others to remain safe in such an activity. Regular visitors to assembly include two members from 'Christian Youth Outreach', who presented an assembly on the theme of persistence.

75. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work in other subjects is used imaginatively to improve pupils' understanding.
- A wide range of resources is available to help pupils learn.
- Procedures for checking pupils' progress and what has been learnt are not yet used to improve teaching.

Commentary

76. In the lesson observed, standards were average and pupils' achievement was satisfactory. A variety of good quality objects and books were used to stimulate pupils' imagination and help their learning. As a result, their response to the lesson was enthusiastic and by the end they were able to make relevant statements about Anglo Saxon life based on information they had gained from illustrations in books and, more importantly, the replica clothing on loan from a museum. The activity provided pupils with a good example of the use of first hand evidence so, as they clearly understood the need to base statements on evidence. More emphasis on discussion, led by the teacher, about the knowledge that could be gained from the sample of clothing would have improved pupils' achievement. The teaching assistant provided good support for less able pupils and a boy for whom English is his second language, and this ensured they were fully included in the learning.

77. Opportunities for linking history to other subjects are identified. A good example of this was in a Year 6 music lesson when pupils were set the challenge of representing the sounds of the Blitz, after listening to a recording of it, with musical instruments. ICT is also used for researching information and word processing the results. Pupils' spiritual development is encouraged when they imagine they are evacuees writing letters home to their parents, and they learn to write from a particular point of view when sending a 'postcard' to a friend about the Roman invasion as either a Roman soldier or a refugee Briton.

78. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The recently appointed subject leader has taken steps to improve her subject knowledge and has recently begun to check samples of pupils' work from across the school. Different approaches to the curriculum are being considered for the younger children in order to make it more relevant and interesting, but the school has yet to establish procedures for ensuring that skills and knowledge are being consistently and effectively taught throughout the school. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

In art, two lessons were observed in the juniors and a selection of pupils' work was seen on display which provided a secure evidence base for what is said in the report. Five music lessons were observed. In design and technology and physical education, whilst a total of three lessons were observed, two of which were good, the subjects were not a focus for the inspection and little pupils' work was available. As a result, no report is made on these subjects. Inspectors noted, however, the school's arrangement for football coaching to be provided by a professional coach from Colchester FC both during and after the school day.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of art and design work seen are satisfactory overall but best where teacher subject knowledge is strong.
- Teaching was good in the lessons seen.
- Good use is made of sketchbooks in which pupils collect and experiment with visual images.
- Pupils' attitudes towards art are good.

Commentary

79. The teaching of art and design was good overall in the lessons observed and pupils achievement was also good. Calm control and well-organised lessons helped to ensure pupils stayed on task. Where the teacher's own subject knowledge was good and their presentation confident, pupils responded with enthusiasm and their achievement was good. They explore ideas of movement in a variety of media. For example, they use figure drawings as a basis for a printing activity, which conveys a sense of motion. Pupils' effective painting and drawing skills are evident in work on portraits and they generally talk confidently about the sources for their work, such as expressionist drawings or Aboriginal art. Sketchbooks are used for experimenting with new techniques or to collect images for use in their work and teachers mark these carefully, providing useful feedback. Teachers have high expectations, encouraging pupils to evaluate their own and others' work and, as a result, they are hard working and keen to improve their efforts.

Music

The quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching was good in the lessons seen.
- Many opportunities are given for practical music-making within the classroom.
- There are currently no extra-curricular clubs offered in this subject.

Commentary

80. Standards in music at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils had recorded their compositions the previous week, and were appraising them with a view to improving the quality of performance. By the end of the lesson, clear progress had been made as pupils developed their ideas for improvement. Year 1 pupils entered the music room with eager anticipation and enthusiasm, carrying their allotted percussion instruments for a practical music lesson. They were able to clap and play rhythmically in short phrases to accompany their singing, which was connected to their topic on Dinosaurs.

81. While planning covers performing, composing, appraising and listening, evidence suggests that performing and composing feature more frequently in lessons. Pupils who have instrumental tuition are encouraged to play their instruments as a basis for group compositions. Various opportunities occur for pupils to perform to their parents, including concerts, Christmas plays and regular assemblies.

82. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory in Years 1 – 2 and good in Years 3 – 6. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, pupils began by listening to a Saxon song. Good answers were given by pupils when the teacher asked for their reaction to what they had heard – "It's like a march because they are going into battle." Careful questioning encourages pupils to use correct musical terminology, such as crescendo and diminuendo. After listening to a recording of sounds from the London Blitz of 1940, Year 6 pupils described what they heard very accurately, although some pupils struggled to explain their ideas in full sentences using correct English. Pupils

clearly enjoy this subject and are well motivated, behaving well even when equipment failure holds up the lesson for a short while.

83. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator supports colleagues well. Music resources, particularly percussion instruments, are adequate, but many will need replacing in the near future. Accommodation is good. Tuition on woodwind and brass instruments is available from a visiting specialist, but there are no extra-curricular activities currently provided by the school.

84. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Music was then a strength of the school, because the subject was taught by a specialist teacher who did not have the responsibility for other subject teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No lessons were seen in this subject and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as **good**.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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