

INSPECTION REPORT

**DOWNHAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY
CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Billericay

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115119

Headteacher: Mrs J M Byrne

Lead inspector: Mrs G Kayembe

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 4th February 2004

Inspection number: 255988

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: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 264

School address: Church Road
Ramsden Heath
Billericay
Essex
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Telephone number: 01268 710387
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Gains

Date of previous inspection: 14th September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Downham is an average sized primary school in a rural part of Essex. It caters for 264 boys and girls aged between 4 and 11 years. Overall, there are slightly more boys than girls but there are variations in gender balance from one year group to another. For example, in Year 3, there are significantly more girls than boys. There are 39 children in the foundation stage (reception classes). About 15 started in January and the rest joined the school in September.

Because the number of pupils in each year group is between 37 and 43, the school has organised its classes into mixed age teaching groups.

The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. A very small number are from minority ethnic groups, mostly other white backgrounds. None are beginners in English, and there currently is only one who does not have English as a mother tongue, but is reasonably fluent in it. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The main needs are social, emotional and behavioural, moderate learning or speech or communication difficulties.

The social and economic backgrounds of pupils are very mixed, but overall are above national norms though economic backgrounds are not as good as the very low eligibility for free school meals (about 2 per cent) would suggest. This low figure is a reflection of the ready availability of employment in the region. Attainment on entry is a little above the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2901	G Kayembe	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology English as an additional language
9779	S Smith	Lay inspector	
2200	J Stirrup	Team inspector	English Citizenship Geography History Religious education
16227	H J Phillips	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education The Foundation Stage
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school and provides very good value for money. The headteacher has successfully promoted an excellent ethos within which staff and pupils flourish and are, therefore, highly motivated to give of their best. Hence, the school provides a very good standard of education and pupils achieve very well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils thrive at the school and do very well academically and in developing their personal and social skills. They are eager to learn.
- High expectations and aspirations are a keystone of the success of the school and are endemic in the thorough planning for learning and in the challenging work provided to pupils.
- The headteacher is an excellent leader who has very successfully created a high quality team of staff who work together for the benefit of pupils.
- Very good attention is given to all pupils and individual needs are very well catered for. Hence, pupils with special education needs achieve very well.
- Overall monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are very rigorous and thorough, but one area where less attention has been given is on the detailed monitoring of attendance.
- Provision for the foundation subjects is good, and in some cases very good. However, there is scope to develop greater depth in recording of work in geography and history.
- Parents and pupils think highly of the school.
- The school has made much progress in information and communication technology (ICT), but there is scope for further improvement.

Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The school has effectively tackled all the issues arising from the last inspection. The quality of teaching is now much better as is the achievement of pupils and the overall standards they are reaching.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A*	B	B	D
mathematics	A	B	A	C
science	A	A	A*	A

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Standards of work are well above average and achievement is very good in Years 1 to 2 and in Years 3 to 6. By Years 2 and 6, standards are well above average overall and in English, mathematics and science, where pupils also achieve very well. Current attainment is largely reflected by the most recent test results for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils except in English, where it is better than the results of 2003 tests indicate. There are fluctuations from year to year in English, largely due to variations in boys' performance; sometimes they perform almost as well as girls, bucking the national trend. Sometimes boys' performance is less good. The very good achievement indicated by the inspection evidence is not mirrored in the comparisons with similar schools in mathematics and English partly because pupils do so well in the tests at the end of Year 2, there is little scope for getting even higher results, comparatively, by the end of Year 6. Given that the work covered across Years 3 to 6 is much more demanding than in Years 1 to 2, the school does very well to maintain the high standards across the school. The few from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils' attainment in most other subject is also high and achievement strong, particularly in design and technology, music and physical education. Attainment in ICT is above average and, in religious

education, is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by Years 2 and 6. However, further use of ICT is limited by resources and not enough use is made of classroom computers by staff. In the foundation stage, achievement is good and standards are above the national norms for five-year-olds. Achievement in the development of reading and writing skills is very good.

The pupils' personal development is very good as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school and have a very positive approach to their learning. Attendance is satisfactory, but has declined from the previous year, reflecting a need for more rigorous monitoring. Punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good as is the overall quality of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning in the foundation stage are good, and in Years 1 to 2 and Years 3 to 6 are very good. Pupils have very well developed learning skills because these skills are so well taught. Pupils settle to task very quickly and work hard, maintaining strong concentration right up to the end of the day. They work very effectively on their own or in groups. Curricular provision is very good overall but work in history and geography lacks the depth of coverage of other subjects. Pupils are very well cared for, supported and guided. Those with special educational needs, or other perceived needs, are very effectively supported, enabling them to achieve equally well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher provides excellent leadership so that all staff work towards shared goals. Support staff are very effective in their roles. The roles of subject leaders and key stage co-ordinators has been very well developed. Hence all have a positive and significant impact on attainment and on improving provision in their areas. Very good procedures are in place to monitor the on-going work of the school which uses monitoring information very effectively to improve provision and, hence, pupils' standards of work and personal development. Governors play an active role in supporting the school. They have very good systems for structuring their work and ensuring that the school is accountable for the quality of its provision. The strong partnership between governors and staff very effectively promotes the work of the school. The deputy headteacher provides excellent support to the headteacher and is a very effective manager in his own right.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think highly of the school. Parental responses to the questionnaire before the inspection indicated very positive views of the school. A few at the meeting were concerned about too much homework for younger pupils, but this was not reflected strongly in the questionnaire returns and, overall, the homework provided supports pupils' learning well. Pupils describe the school as a happy and friendly place. The vast majority are pleased to be there.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Monitor in greater detail and depth the attendance of pupils in order to improve it.
- Improve the depth of the history and geography curriculum and hence the quality of written work.
- Improve the use of ICT through improved provision and use of resources.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Overall standards of work are high and well above average. Achievement is very good. Pupils of all abilities and background do well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are well above average in English, mathematics and science.
- Work across most of the foundation subjects is of a high standard. However, in history and geography, written work lacks sufficient depth.
- Children in the foundation stage make rapid progress in literacy and numeracy so that, by the time they begin Year 1, most read and write independently and do simple sums correctly.
- Use of literacy and numeracy across the subjects of the curriculum is good. However, more use could be made of computers in classrooms.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve creditable results in national tests by Years 2 and 6.

Commentary

Foundation Stage – Reception year

1. Children enter the reception stage with standards that are marginally above average. They make good progress and achieve well so that by the end of their reception year the majority have exceeded age related expectations and pupils' work is of an above average standard. This is especially so in relation to literacy and numeracy.

Key Stage 1 – Years 1 to 2

2. National Curriculum test results in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 2 have been improving at a good rate over the last five years. The trend of improvement has been faster than the trend nationally. By 2003, results in all three subjects were well above average and compared well with the results of similar schools, especially in writing where results were well above the average of similar schools. The table below shows the comparisons based on average point scores between the school's results and results nationally, and clearly illustrates that the school is doing far better.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.4 (16.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.1 (16.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.7 (17.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Inspection evidence confirms the standards indicated by the most recent test results. Pupils' work shows that they are achieving very well and reaching well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Their attainment is also good, and above average, in art and design, design and technology, ICT, music, physical education and religious education. Achievement is good in most of these subjects and very good in design and technology and physical education. Standards of work are broadly average in geography and history and pupils'

achievement is satisfactory overall, though there are examples of good achievement, particularly in relation to pupils' oral skills.

Key Stage 2 – Years 3 to 6

4. National Curriculum test results for Year 6 pupils have also been improving well over the last five years, particularly in science and mathematics. Improvement in English has been less steady, partly because of the fluctuating performances of boys in particular, but at times also of girls. Though the school does not have a mobility problem in terms of turnover of pupils, more join than leave and those that join tend to do so during Key Stage 2; hence there is an impact of this on test results in English in particular. Nonetheless, though the overall average points score in English in 2003 was not as high as in mathematics and science, a well above average proportion of pupils reached the expected level in English. The proportion who reached the higher level, level 5, in English was average. In mathematics, the 2003 results were well above average and in science they were very high.

5. Inspection evidence indicates that the very good progress, and hence very good achievement, seen in earlier years is continued through Years 3 to 6 so that, by the time pupils reach Year 6, current standards of work are equally high. Attainment is well above average in English, mathematics and science and also in design and technology and music. Attainment is above average in ICT and in religious education it is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus followed by the school. In the remaining subjects it is above average with the exception of history and geography where it is average. Pupils achieve at least well in most subjects, and very well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, music and physical education. Only in history and geography is progress currently slower, though gaining in pace as teachers develop the new approach being promoted by the school. Greater emphasis is now being placed on developing historical and geographical knowledge and concepts through the use of enquiry and investigation. During this period of transition, written work is not of the same high quality as seen in other subjects, or as good as the quality of oral work seen in lessons.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.9 (28.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.8 (27.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	31.6 (30.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 39 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Rates of progress against targets in individual educational plans and in literacy and numeracy are high and impact significantly across many curriculum areas. Many pupils with special educational needs attain the expected level in national tests at the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence shows that the level of support especially the one-to-one support with reading helps to significantly improve pupils' attainment. Most of those in Years 5 and 6 with special educational needs are not far behind other pupils in their reading or writing, and can read simple novels by themselves. They do hesitate when they encounter new words but many make good attempts at decoding these. A group of Year 5 pupils made very good progress in identifying deliberate mistakes and correcting them in a text they were working on with a teaching assistant.

7. All pupils make good use of literacy and numeracy skills across the subjects of the curriculum. This enhances their standard of work across the board and also reinforces their literacy and numeracy development. ICT skills are being well developed but teachers miss opportunities to make better use of computers in class. In addition, the cramped suite and small number of computers means that pupils have only limited time in lessons to develop their ICT capability. In

lessons, pupils achievement is very good in using ICT, but over time it is not quite as good because of the limited access to ICT.

8. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as the rest. The one pupil with English as an additional language has made very rapid progress in learning it, and is also making very good progress in other subject areas.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to school. Behaviour is very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good overall. Attendance for last year is broadly in line with other schools but has fallen recently.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school, want to learn and behave very well.
- Their positive attitudes to learning result in very good achievement.
- Harmonious relationships enable pupils to develop as confident learners.
- Pupils increasingly become mature and responsible and grow in self-esteem.
- Monitoring of attendance is not sufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

9. Levels of attendance for last year are broadly satisfactory, but have since fallen. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and much absence is because of holidays. No regular support from the education welfare service has been received for a considerable period. Attendance levels have not previously been monitored to ensure concerns are identified and followed up systematically. Levels for a few pupils with unsatisfactory attendance last year have since fallen significantly. Pupils arrive punctually for morning registration, and management of the school day ensures that time is used productively.
10. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school. They enjoy their work, like their teachers and feel secure and valued. This makes a significant contribution to their self-confidence and the high levels of co-operation and very good behaviour seen in lessons. Pupils respond very well to the trust placed in them to work productively on their own or in small groups. They persevere very well with tasks set, asking for help only when really necessary. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the activities organised for them outside lessons and are appreciative of the work their teachers put into these.
11. Pupils develop a very good understanding of the Christian religion and how the principles that underpin this are related to other cultures and religions. They are sensitive to the feelings of others, as is apparent in the high levels of respect and care they have for their peers. They are very responsible about matters relating to the welfare and happiness of the school community and know that rules are important to underpin this. Responsibility towards others and for their own actions develops progressively as they move through the years. The encouragement they receive to interact with and understand the wider community results in them developing empathy for others and a strong sense of responsibility towards those in need of help and support. Pupils are developing well their knowledge and understanding of other cultures, including the cultural diversity represented in British society today.
12. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to learning and are keen to engage in activities and lessons whether withdrawn from, or part of, the whole class. Pupils are very supportive of one another and were observed talking about the different needs of others.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	0.4

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
White – British
White – any other White background
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
188
3
30

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

13. There were no exclusions last year, and this is indicative of the overall very good behaviour of pupils at the school. However, there are pupils whose behaviour can be difficult at times. It is a credit to the school that this is not easily identifiable as the management of behaviour by staff is excellent. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds seem to be well integrated into the school. The school has a clear race equality policy which it monitors well, including racist incidents.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and particularly in Years 1 to 2 and In Years 3 to 6. The overall quality of teaching in the foundation stage is good, often very good. Assessment arrangements and use of assessment to support teaching and learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of planning and preparation is excellent.
- Teachers challenge pupils very effectively in the majority of lessons and provide work that is demanding and which promotes rapid gains in learning.
- Teaching assistants make very good contribution to the pupils' learning.
- Though teachers have well developed skills in ICT and make good use is made of the computer suite, little use is made of the computers in classrooms.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well.
- In some subjects, better use could be made of assessment information to support the setting of individual targets.

Commentary

14. None of the teaching seen was less than satisfactory and nearly all of it was good or better. A high proportion, over half, was very good or better. Pupils' written work reflects the quality seen in lesson observations. Teaching and learning were at least good overall in all subjects and in many they were very good. There were no significant differences in the quality of teaching and learning in any year group.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (7%)	23 (51%)	18 (40%)	1 (2%)	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.

15. Pupils' thrive as learners because the expectations of teachers are high and they are highly motivated to rise to the challenges they are provided with. As a result, the pupils' work rate is high and lessons are businesslike. The huge volume of written work available for the inspection is a testament to the high rate of productivity during lessons. Lessons are very thoroughly and effectively planned and prepared so that teachers and pupils are clear about the learning outcomes. The teaching methods and approaches are very well developed so that pupils are fully engaged as learners and very effectively involved in lessons. Because pupils are expected to work actively, and to participate, in lessons, they have a highly developed capacity to use their own initiative, to get on with their work and to try to solve problems for themselves before asking for help. Their very well developed literacy skills mean that they are able to get down to work quickly and are not reliant on adults to help them interpret questions or tasks.
16. Activities are interesting and teachers are very clear how these will contribute to pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils are actively involved and pair and group work are extremely well promoted and managed. As a result, pupils develop very good skills in working with others and there is never any fuss made about who they have been paired up or grouped with. All in all, a key to the success of the teaching is the very rigorous and systematic structuring of learning so that pupils build new skills, knowledge and ideas with confidence and relative ease.
17. Resources are well used in teaching and learning, and, in particular, teaching assistants are very well deployed during lessons so that they make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Their use of questioning and probing when working with pupils is exemplary and it is clear that teachers' own excellent use of questioning acts as an exemplar for support staff. Though teachers' ICT skills are well developed, they do not make enough use of the computers based in classrooms (one in most classes). This is a missed opportunity. Some good uses were seen, such as the use of a program to model sound waves which was demonstrated in a Year 6 lesson on sound, and which helped pupils to understand how sound waves travel and how pitch and loudness affect the overall sound produced.
18. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good, with both the teachers and teaching assistants playing a very active role in furthering pupils' learning. This is characterised by highly effective questioning, enthusiastic teaching and a genuine knowledge of the pupils. There is an effective blend of withdrawal from class and inclusion in whole-class lessons. Staff are very aware of the targets in individual education plans and the long-term objectives for statemented pupils. This awareness generates very good progress because the work provided to pupils and activities planned for them focus very well on these areas for development of individuals and groups. Resources are matched well to pupil need and support learning effectively. There are detailed records that ensure pupil progress is maintained. The school's tracking and monitoring system regularly checks for any pupil not progressing as expected.

19. Assessment systems are very well developed overall and teachers make good use of assessment information to plan lessons and support the development of individual pupils' learning. In effect, teachers know their pupils well and know exactly which next steps are needed to promote their learning further. Though most pupils have a reasonably clear idea of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve, this is not always as sharply developed as it could be as there is some inconsistent practice in the use of target setting. In the best examples, individual targets are set and shared with pupils for literacy and numeracy. Hence, each pupil's targets are very precisely matched to their needs. However, in other classes, targets are general or group targets rather than individualised ones, resulting in not quite such a good match between individual needs and the targets set.

The curriculum

The curriculum provided by the school is very good. Enrichment activities, including out-of-school activities, very successfully complement the taught curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very broad, very well balanced and enriching curriculum.
- Subject coverage, in terms of breadth and depth, is very good in most cases though this is not yet the case in history and geography.
- The approaches adopted in curriculum development ensure that pupils are taught problem solving, enquiry and investigative skills to a high level and these help them to become very effective learners.
- The curriculum support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, is very good.
- Though accommodation is satisfactory overall, the library and ICT suite are inadequate for a school of this size.

Commentary

20. The school has responded very well to, and hence very effectively addressed, all the areas for development identified in the previous report, particularly the need to fulfil statutory requirements in the teaching of ICT and design and technology.
21. The school provides a rich and innovative curriculum which goes deeply into, in many respects, the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the agreed syllabus for religious education used by the school. Requirements are fully met. The curriculum reflects the aims, objectives and the Christian nature of the school. National literacy and numeracy requirements are used exceptionally well to promote learning in English and mathematics. There are identified members of staff with responsibility for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, with good opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills within individual subjects.
22. Written guidance provided nationally and other commercial documentation are very well used to provide an imaginative and interesting curriculum in science and all other subjects. Though currently history and geography lack the level of depth of coverage seen in other subjects, this is a result of moving from a textbook orientated approach to an inquiry/investigative approach. Though, in these subjects, the oral work in lessons reflects high level discussion and research work, this has yet to be fully developed in terms of more rigorous recording of work in pupils' exercise books.
23. Planning for all subjects is very good, with weekly and medium-term plans providing high-quality guidance for the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers in the mixed year classes work with teachers who have classes containing pupils of the same age in order to ensure consistency in the delivery of the curriculum. There are

curriculum development weeks when the whole school focuses on one area of the curriculum, and these have been used most successfully to develop the breadth and depth of experiences in a variety of subjects and areas, such as science, cultural diversity and the arts. The school provides pupils with a good range of extra-curricular activities including both sporting and musical activities as well as an ICT and a calligraphy club. Pupils participate in a school performance annually. Overall, curricular enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is very good.

24. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is promoted well in the school, both in discrete slots of time, called '*circle time*', when pupils sit in a circle and, led by the class teacher, focus on issues related to their personal development, and in other school activities. The regular assemblies, visits and visitors also provide personal, social and health education. Elements of personal, social and health education are also delivered through subjects such as physical education. The school governors have suitable policies in place for both sex education and drugs awareness. These aspects of the curriculum are delivered within personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons, with a particular focus in Years 5 and 6.
25. The curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good. It enables children to work towards the nationally defined early learning goals, and pupils in Year 1 are introduced to the National Curriculum.
26. Strategies to ensure that all pupils have equality of access to the planned curriculum and extra-curricular activities are firmly in place. Overall, the inclusiveness of the school is excellent. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils, and provides them with relevant extension activities. The range of curriculum opportunities for pupils with special educational needs is very good. There is wide ranging provision, often on an individual basis, which promotes each pupil's achievement in a variety of areas of learning. For example, fine and gross motor skills are very effectively and energetically developed through a '*motor skills club*'. Teachers and teaching assistants seek to find new and exciting methods to encourage pupils to reach good standards. An in-depth knowledge of pupils and their needs impacts heavily throughout the curriculum and allows learning to flourish. A very efficient use of time is made for individuals and groups, resulting in a highly organised timetable of provision for pupils with special educational needs. An example of this was where pupils with a range of needs had a short sandwich-making session which encouraged fine motor skills. The session seen also had the opportunity for developing pupils' moral and social skills. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the all-school activities and extra-curricular activities, for example dance, football and the school council.
27. The school has very good links with its main feeder high school, and pupils in both Years 5 and 6 visit the high school for '*taster*' days; staff from the high school take pupils for individual lessons.
28. Accommodation for teaching subjects is satisfactory. A significant number of classes take place in demountable accommodation and the school itself is very compact, and staff are very conscious about how they use space in order to maximise it for pupils. The joint library and ICT suite are really quite inadequate for pupils' needs. Play surfaces are currently limited but this is being addressed by a building programme to create more, using the grassed areas around the school. Staffing in the school, in terms of numbers and qualifications of teachers and support staff, is likewise satisfactory. The school has a good balance of comparatively new and well-established teachers. There are adequate classroom assistants to support pupils with identified special educational needs. Resources within individual areas of the curriculum are satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, protection and guidance of pupils is very good overall. Support, advice and guidance to pupils on their academic and personal development are good. Induction arrangements

are very good. The school has very good systems for seeking the views of pupils and involving them in decision-making.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Conscientious attention given to the care and safety of pupils leads to very good standards.
- Pupils' views are sought, valued and acted upon, resulting in high levels of self-esteem.
- Very good attention to pupils' personal development permeates everyday activities.

Commentary

29. Very high levels of attention are given to health and safety. The person with overall responsibility is knowledgeable and ensures risk assessments, maintenance of premises and inspection of equipment and appliances are carried out thoroughly. The governors are very conscientious in verifying that the school fulfils its responsibilities. Pupils are supervised very well and members of staff pay high levels of attention to safety matters in lessons. There are effective arrangements to deal with accidents, first-aid emergencies and prescribed medicines. Healthy living is promoted well, resulting in pupils developing a growing understanding of diet, exercise and how to look after themselves. Procedures for child protection meet local guidelines and the person with overall responsibility ensures that staff know what to do in the event of concern. There is close liaison with social services where this is needed.
30. Arrangements to ensure children get off to a confident start in the reception class are very well managed. Adults know pupils very well; there are high levels of mutual respect and pupils are confident about approaching them. Personal guidance is planned well through the personal, health and social education programme. It covers all the required areas, although, at present, monitoring is informal. Close attention is given, throughout, to children's growth as mature, responsible, caring and confident people. This has a very positive impact on the school as a community of learners. There are good procedures to monitor academic progress and changes to daily planning reflect pupils' needs. Support for individuals in lessons is effective and targeted well so that those with special educational needs are very well supported and guided. Marking often provides useful guidance about how to improve. This, together with well-understood targets that are discussed with teachers, ensure pupils have a good understanding of their own learning. Arrangements for transfer to secondary education are planned very well to minimise interruptions to learning.
31. Every effort is made to seek pupils' views. The encouragement they are given results in these views being offered confidently. This empowers them to influence all aspects of the school's life that have an impact on them directly and also to voice opinions beyond these. For example, when they show concern about how kitchen waste is disposed of. Pupils know their views are valued and that they have a genuine impact on decisions taken.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The very good partnership that has been developed with parents, the community and other schools has a positive impact on how well pupils learn.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school and parents work together very well to support pupils' learning.
- The community is used very well to enrich classroom learning.
- Expertise is shared very well across the family of schools.
- Very good induction supports pupils at each new stage of their education.

Commentary

32. The very good working partnership between parents and the school has a positive impact on how well children learn. Parents' views are actively sought, they have a full say in decisions that effect them and understand how these have been arrived at. Parents are highly supportive of the school and value their positive relationships with staff. They are confident the school will deal with their concerns well and make prompt contact where needed. Overall, the arrangements to keep parents informed are comprehensive. Annual progress reports very effectively inform about English, mathematics and science and include suitably expressed targets. These are amplified very well at consultation meetings. Parents value the generous opportunities provided to see their children's work and consult with teachers. Although variable between classes, there are examples of very good practice in the use of home/school diaries to inform and for two-way communication. High levels of support from parents in classrooms, during school visits and through the very effective parent and teacher association (PTA) have a positive impact on learning.
33. The school has very positive links with the local community. It successfully seeks community involvement, for example the Billericay Ministry and local MP, to influence a growing understanding in pupils about issues beyond school. Resources within the community are used well to support personal development, as with drugs education. The many trips and visits out of school, including residential stays, enrich classroom learning very effectively and contribute well to developing self-confidence and personal effectiveness.
34. Links with the local family of schools are very productive. Pupils' learning is significantly enhanced through the sharing of expertise, resources and staff development opportunities. Curricular links are effective, and planning to support pupils' transfer to secondary education is thorough and targeted at minimising interruptions to learning. All necessary information is transferred before pupils start in Year 7. Special educational needs co-ordinators liaise very well and tailor transfer arrangements to individual needs.
35. The school communicates very well with parents of pupils with special educational needs, and meetings to discuss pupils have a clear sense of purpose. Parents are very well involved in regular reviews and setting targets. Links with outside agencies who can provide specialist support are fully utilised to develop the pupils' learning. For example, the use of occupational therapists, physical and neurological specialists and the school nurse.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Other staff with leadership and management responsibilities make a very good contribution to the overall leadership and management of the school. The deputy headteacher provides excellent support to the headteacher. Governors have a strong involvement in the work of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership because she makes clear the direction for development and has an unstinting focus on high achievement.
- The deputy headteacher complements the headteacher well and provides excellent support for school development and improvement.
- The roles of subject leaders and other members with responsibilities in the school are very well developed so that they influence directly the quality of education and hence pupils' learning and achievement.
- Governors have strong involvement in the work of the school and know its strengths and weaknesses well. They work very effectively in partnership with staff.
- Excellent attention is paid to staff development so that it is focused on areas which have the greatest bearing on pupil achievement.

Commentary

36. The headteacher is a dedicated professional who provides informed and inspirational leadership to staff, governors and pupils. Her focus on high achievement and the pursuit of excellence is total and hence high expectations permeate all areas of the school's work. Very good management coupled with clarity of vision mean that there is excellent communication of key goals. Staff, governors and pupils share a common purpose, and high quality systems, policies and procedures are used to inform and drive the school's work in order to achieve these key goals. Very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school at all levels mean that all staff have a clear idea of strengths and areas that need further work or development. Information from monitoring activities and performance management is skilfully used to inform and drive school improvement. All subject leaders and staff with responsibilities across the school have very well developed leadership and management roles so that they directly influence the quality of education and care provided for pupils. The only area where such rigorous approaches to management are lacking is in the monitoring and improvement of attendance. However, the headteacher is already well on her way to addressing this issue. Leadership and management by subject co-ordinators is at least good, and in many cases it is very good. They bring energy and drive to their roles and regularly monitor planning, interview pupils and scrutinise written work. Feedback to staff from monitoring activities is very well managed, hence improvement is secured. The deputy headteacher is actively involved in the leadership and management of the school and provides excellent support to the headteacher and other staff.
37. The leadership and management of pupils with special educational needs are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator plays a highly effective role in the structuring and running of a very methodical support and intervention plan for pupils. She clearly articulates the way forward for pupils and does this with vigour and enthusiasm.
38. Provision for staff development is excellent. It is very well linked to the school improvement plan and to the needs of the school. Training activities are very carefully selected so that they will have a direct impact on achievement or pupils' personal development and help the school move forward. No opportunity is missed to learn from best practice elsewhere and the school has very good mechanisms for sharing best practice that exists amongst its own staff. The school gains excellent value for money on its spending on professional development activities.
39. The governing body makes a major and significant contribution to the success of the school. They are regular visitors and have very well organised systems and mechanisms for helping them to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and to provide effective support to staff. Through their committee structure, but also through their individual links with subject and other areas of the school, governors monitor very effectively how the school is doing and ensure that statutory requirements are met. Their close working partnership with the school means they are closely involved in setting the strategic direction and vision for the school.

40. Support staff make a very positive contribution to the school. They are every bit a part of the school and of the excellent teamwork evident across the school.
41. The school's finances are very well managed. Funding is very carefully directed towards what matters most and on areas that will have the greatest impact on pupils' learning and personal development. There is a very good link to the school improvement plan and governors, as well as the headteacher, monitor spending very carefully. The income per pupil is a little on the low side. Given that pupils achieve so well and reach such high standards, the school provides very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£580,034	Balance from previous year	£67,060*
Total expenditure	£575,039	Balance carried forward to the next	£4,995
Expenditure per pupil	£2,309		

*This carryover was earmarked for building works and to support staffing for the following year.

Barriers and aids to continued school improvement

42. The school's accommodation hinders its development and places restrictions on what it can do. However, the 'can-do' approach of the school, spearheaded by the headteacher, lets little stand in the way of development and improvement.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is broad and balanced and of **good** quality.

- Children's achievements are good and many reach above average standards by the end of reception.
 - The quality of teaching is consistently good and much of it is very good.
 - Good support is provided for individual children, especially those with learning difficulties.
 - Good leadership and management ensure that children benefit from a well-balanced range of learning experiences.
43. Overall, provision for children's learning in the Foundation Stage is very well managed and led, with good teamwork between skilled and experienced teachers and teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are deployed very well and provide very good support for children with special educational needs. There is a good curriculum framework which effectively addresses all the required areas of learning. This is effectively delivered in an integrated way so that children's key skills of language and communication, numeracy, creative, physical and personal development are promoted throughout daily activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teamwork and management of pupils.
- Staff are effective in developing children's social awareness and attitudes.

Commentary

44. In their personal, social and emotional development, children make very good progress. They show increasing self-control and quickly understand and respond to the '*class code*' for behaviour. They show an awareness of the needs of others, take turns and share equipment as they work and play alongside and with each other. They quickly become confident, enjoy coming into school and are very independent in their own personal hygiene and self-help skills. For example, at lunchtime, they choose from the range of foods, carry their meal trays and clear away. They collect their own belongings when preparing to leave at the end of the day. They change quickly for physical education lessons, few needing minimal support with dressing and undressing.
45. Very good management of children's behaviour, with clear expectations for attention and social interactions along with very good use of praise and encouragement, is effective in developing children's positive attitudes and ability to sustain concentration.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress in achieving language and literacy skills.
- Teaching makes very good use of suitable approaches and resources.

Commentary

46. Children make very good progress in communication, language and literacy skills. Very good use of big books and appropriate objects or toys captures attention and stimulates imagination. Children become enthralled and involved with stories and this effectively promotes their speaking and listening and extends their language skills. Children know the title of a story, the author and illustrator. Many recognise a few words and some older children recognise the initial letters in words and can say the sounds they represent. Many are beginning to identify the sounds in the middle and end of spoken words and the most able children spell out simple words such as 'sad'. In discussion of a story line, children demonstrate very good progress in extending their vocabulary, expressing feelings and using past, present and future tenses.
47. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is very good. Lessons are very well planned and structured with a very well-balanced range of tasks and well-chosen resources to ensure that all children are effectively engaged and challenged.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve a good basic grasp of number and shape.
- Staff make very good use of assessment to meet children's needs.

Commentary

48. In mathematical development, children make good progress in achieving number skills due to the good quality teaching they receive. They count to ten and many can recognise the numerals, write them and match them to sets of objects correctly. They are beginning to grasp the idea of 'one more' and 'one less'; and the older or more able children know how to add and take away one from a given number up to ten. Using pegs and peg-boards, some can take away a small number from ten and find out how many are left. They have a good grasp of the comparative weight of objects, know the basic two-dimensional geometric shapes and older/more able children use the symbols of '+' and '=' correctly.
49. There is very good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants in assessing and recording children's attainments and planning to provide effective learning experiences.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a wide range of experiences.
- Good use is made of the school and local environments to develop skills of observation and investigation.

Commentary

50. Children have a very good range of experiences which effectively develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They show very good investigational approaches in their play. They explore the rich variety of available materials and objects using their senses and relate things imaginatively to characters from stories or their daily experiences. For example, they construct items by joining selected pieces of materials to become buildings, cars, aeroplanes or animals. They examine old and new toys closely, comparing textures, hardness or softness and the ways they move. They know that new toys are battery operated compared to the wind-up operation of old toys. They compare the materials that toys are made from and know that old scooters are made of wood compared to new ones made of plastic and metal. They become very observant and interested in the natural world through regular discussion about the weather, experiencing snow, rain, sun and wind, through excursions outside to study the environment, and noting changes in living things. Children are familiar with computers and have a good appreciation of what they can do; for example, one child asked if the book illustrator had made the pictures using a computer. Teaching in this area is often very good.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are effectively challenged in physical education lessons.
- Opportunities for physically challenging play are restricted by the weather.

Commentary

51. In their physical development, children respond well to music by stepping in time to the rhythm. They negotiate space well, avoiding each other and equipment. Most achieve effective skipping movements as they alter the way they move as the music changes. They work well with a partner and mirror each others' movements. They understand about hygiene, wash hands before handling food and know that exercise and healthy food are good for you. They use the challenging playground equipment confidently to crawl, slide, climb, swing and jump and steadily improve balance and co-ordination skills. However, there is no cover for the well-equipped outside play area and, consequently, opportunities for regular use are interrupted by inclement weather.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities to develop children's creative abilities are included in many lessons.
- Children are effectively supported in their creative activities.

Commentary

52. Resources for creative development are good and used well to provide good creative learning opportunities for all children in all areas of learning. Children use construction kits and equipment purposefully, skilfully and imaginatively, in their activities and play, to make items such as a '*skateboard park*' or '*gorilla*'.

53. Many children use markers, pencils, paint and paintbrushes with increasing skill to make recognisable shapes and images of buildings, people and animals. They cut out pieces of materials and carefully use glue to stick items in place to create patterns or sets of numbers during numeracy tasks. In music, children make good progress and quickly learn the names of a wide range of percussion instruments and, through experimentation, discover different ways of creating sounds using hands and beaters. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do very well and attain well above average standards by Years 2 and 6.
- Very good teaching enables pupils to make measurable gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the English language and its uses.
- Very good use is made of the literacy hour. Hence, it makes a significant contribution to raising standards. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to explore and write about factual materials.
- Current assessment procedures do not always provide individual pupils with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning.

Commentary

54. Attainment upon entry into Year 1 is above average in all areas of English. Achievement is very good in Years 1 and 2, with the result that standards are well above average by the time pupils are seven. This is reflected in the most recent national assessment tasks, when standards in reading and writing were well above average in comparison to national averages, and above average and well above average when compared to schools with a similar intake.
55. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 3 to 6 and standards by the current group of Year 6 pupils are well above average. Standards in recent national assessment tasks, however, were above average in comparison to national averages, and average when compared to schools with a similar intake.
56. Most pupils are confident speakers when they arrive in Year 1 and are keen to respond to teachers' questions and to talk about their work. Pupils continue to make very good progress in their oral skills in Years 3 to 6, and many of them are confident in their ability to articulate their ideas and opinions in a logical and structured manner. Pupils in all years are good listeners. They listen with interest to their teachers and value the ideas and opinions of others. Chances for pupils to engage in drama and role-play activities make a positive contribution to speaking and listening skills, and standards at age seven and eleven are well above average.
57. Many pupils already have good reading habits when they arrive in Year 1. Phonic and word-building skills are taught well in Years 1 and 2, and the school's own colour-coded reading scheme is used to very good effect to promote reading skills. Pupils receive very good support in their reading at home and this contributes to the well-above-average reading skills demonstrated by pupils in Year 2.
58. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are keen and regular readers. The majority of pupils have a good vocabulary and very good reading comprehension skills, resulting in standards in reading that are well above average by the time pupils are eleven.

59. Pupils with identified reading concerns, including those with special educational needs, receive good support from classroom assistants.
60. Standards attained in writing are well above average by the time pupils are seven. Pupils develop and build on the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and learn to use them in a range of worthwhile writing activities.
61. Pupils extend their English skills in Years 3 and 6 and incorporate them within a range of imaginative and challenging writing activities. Most of these activities, however, are focused on fictional works, with too few opportunities for pupils to respond to factual materials and to develop and understand how language can be used to convey information in different forms. Pupils' handwriting and presentation is good, though there are too few opportunities for pupils to word-process their work.
62. Pupils plan their work well, and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to improve the quality of their work through the use of redrafting skills. Standards in written work at the end of Year 6 are well above average. The good and very good achievement in lessons is enhanced by pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their wish to please their teachers through the production of good quality written work.
63. The quality of teaching is very good with some excellent teaching observed during the inspection. Lessons are extremely well planned, organised and managed and teachers ensure that work matches the needs and abilities of pupils in the mixed year classes. Teachers use and deliver the literacy hour in a very effective manner and it is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' written work that this is making a very positive contribution to raising standards in the subject. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from teachers and classrooms assistants.
64. Where teaching is at its best, teachers provide pupils with a range of challenging speaking and listening, reading and writing activities within a single lesson, with each activity reinforcing and extending skills in the other. Teachers use the final part of lessons very well to check if learning objectives have been met and to share and celebrate what pupils have achieved.
65. Leadership and management in the subject are very good; the subject co-ordinator leads by his own very good classroom practice. In the comparatively short time he has been in post, he has put into place a good range of policies and documentation to support teachers in the delivery of the subject. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject are of very high quality and the information from such activities is expertly used to address shortcomings.
66. The school provides pupils with a very good scheme of work and a challenging range of English activities. Although the department uses good assessment procedures to assess pupils' progress and to set whole-class targets, pupils are not always given sharp and identifiable medium-term targets for improvement. The subject co-ordinator is aware of a number of the areas for development identified in this report and is in the process of addressing them. The high standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. Literacy across the curriculum is promoted well, with good examples of extended written work observed in history. In science, written work provides very good opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and audiences, such as report writing and brain-storming ideas. Design and technology folders show that pupils have good opportunities to develop researching skills and to produce written product evaluations, hence developing further their vocabulary and critical/analytical skills. Work in ICT promotes pupils' skills in extracting relevant information from the internet or CD-ROMs and in note-taking, as well as their skills in writing stories and

factual accounts using word-processors. However, in religious education, there are missed opportunities for extended writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress over time and achieve high standards.
- The quality of teaching is often very good.
- A few pupils do not have sufficient practical experiences to support their learning.
- Good improvements in provision are very well led and managed.

Commentary

68. By the end of Year 2, standards of work are well above average and many pupils attain very high standards within Level 3 of the National Curriculum. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achieve very well. They know the properties of regular two-dimensional shapes and understand 'half' and 'quarter'. They are confident with measures of length, weight and time, understand and interpret simple graphs, know place value beyond 100 and use simple multiplication and division accurately. Less able pupils and others with learning difficulties make good progress but some are insecure with addition and subtraction involving the interchange of tens and units or hundreds and tens.
69. By Year 6, standards of work are well above average and pupils throughout Years 3 to 6 show very good achievement. In Years 3 and 4, pupils work productively and achieve high standards in relation to capability, such as solving problems involving the addition of time and doubling numbers up to 100. In Years 5 and 6, a substantial proportion of pupils are achieving success at National Curriculum Level 5. Pupils of lower ability and those with learning difficulties achieve good standards within Level 4. For example, pupils apply knowledge of equivalent fractions effectively, showing enthusiasm in their work through a sense of achievement when solving problems. By the end of Year 6, higher attainers achieve competence with long multiplication and division, understand and use brackets when solving problems and have a good understanding of graphs and measures, including area, perimeter and volume.
70. Teaching is very good overall and leads to very good learning and achievement. Teachers provide a good range of challenges to meet the needs of less able/younger pupils and extend more able/older pupils. Good planning, organisation and matching of work to individual needs enable pupils to achieve well in relation to their capabilities and to reach high standards. Work very effectively engages all pupils in mental work and because tasks are challenging and make pupils think for themselves. The brisk pace of lessons maintains pupils' efforts and concentration effectively and ensures that time is very well used.
71. In the best lessons, rapid, well-chosen questions challenge and excite pupils to solve numerical problems using their knowledge of number facts and their understanding of the four operations. Very good use of small, individual boards and markers enables effective monitoring of pupils' learning and their use of mathematical approaches and strategies. Very good classroom organisation enables effective support of group-work. There is very good inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties because teachers manage and organise classrooms very well to enable support to be effective. Very good use of ongoing assessment ensures clarity in pupils' learning and enables them to gain confidence in applying previous learning to more complex operations. However, teachers do not provide sufficient practical experiences for a few pupils who have continuing difficulties to overcome their misunderstandings with, for example, place value relating to practical experiences. Additionally, teachers do not yet have up-to-date ICT facilities to support their teaching and enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

72. Provision for mathematics is very well led and managed. The curriculum is well planned, balanced and organised to maintain continuity across year groups and to ensure that pupils build new learning progressively and systematically. Good analysis of assessment helps to identify strengths and weaknesses and informs future planning. Very good monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work, support of colleagues and sharing skills have led to good development of teachers' skills. The good range of resources is used effectively, but more frequent use could be made of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Since the last inspection good improvements have been made in teachers' expectations, the quality of teaching and standards being achieved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Pupils make good and confident use of numeracy across subjects of the curriculum. Their basic good understanding of number means that they readily apply numeracy skills to relevant contexts in other subjects, for example, drawing graphs to illustrate patterns in science. The use of numeracy in subjects such as ICT, design and technology and science supports very well the overall development of pupils' attainment in mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning are very good.
- There is a very high level of challenge in lessons so pupils achieve very well.
- The focus on developing investigational skills in science is excellent and this approach brings science to life for pupils
- Monitoring of standards and using monitoring information for improvement are very effective in raising standards
- Pupils are well supported in lessons and those of all abilities achieve well. However, there is scope for the school to provide a range of recording frames to match the differing abilities and ages in lessons, especially lower down in the school.

Commentary

74. By Years 2 and 6, standards of attainment are well above average and pupils achieve very well across the whole school. Those with special educational needs are supported very effectively in lessons, either by teaching assistants or class teachers. Hence they also achieve very well. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they demonstrate a strong depth of knowledge of scientific principles and ideas and provide cogent and well expressed reasons for explaining scientific phenomena. However, Year 6 pupils do not always explain the outcomes of experimental investigation as well in their books though, in other year groups, pupils are developing very well their capacity to draw relevant and well-argued conclusions from their observations. Even low-attaining pupils provide creditable arguments and explanations, whilst high-attaining pupils develop these in depth bringing their wider scientific thinking into play. Pupils across the school have well developed practical skills and are given opportunities to think about planning experiments at an early stage in their school careers. Even the youngest demonstrate very good capacity to identify how they could carry out a test to show, for example, which type of paper is the best to write on. Exceptionally, in a Year 1 lesson, not only could pupils identify which paper but they could discuss and put forward reasons for some unexpected results. This is a direct result of the very good teaching and the depth to which the science curriculum is planned and delivered.
75. Teaching and learning are consistently very good because teachers challenge pupils to think and solve problems for themselves. The opportunities provided for pupils to carry out

investigational work are excellent. This is very well planned and resources are marshalled very systematically to help pupils develop a very good understanding of the subject. However, especially in Years 1 to 2, there is scope for developing a range of recording frames to match the different needs of pupils in the same class, especially in terms of providing more open-ended recording templates or frames for more able pupils. Questioning by teachers is dynamic and very probing, hence making pupils think deeply about the subject matter. Pupils respond to the challenge with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They give their whole hearted commitment to learning. The volume of written work indicates that there is very good coverage of the science curriculum. Presentation of the work of high-attaining pupils in particular is excellent. Marking is good and provides useful feedback to pupils on the quality of their work and how it can improve.

76. Leadership and management are very good because there is a sustained focus on improving the quality of education and the standards of work. The subject co-ordinator has a very positive impact on standards and achievement through regular monitoring and evaluation activities and feedback to pupils and teachers on areas for improvement. As a result, the issues in the last inspection report have been very well tackled. Hence, improvement is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All teachers make effective use of the ICT suite and as a result pupils are making good progress in developing their skills.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the suite is very good.
- The accommodation and resources place constraints on pupils' achievement, though it is good, nonetheless.
- Teachers do not make enough use of computers based in classrooms.
- The area is very well led and managed.

Commentary

77. Standards of work are above average by Years 2 and 6. Achievement throughout the school is good, though it is often better in lessons than over time, though even over time achievement is good. The progress over time is not as good as in lessons because the computer suite can only accommodate a limited number of computers. Hence, in most lessons only half the class use ICT, with two to three pupils sharing a computer, whilst the other half use the library part of the suite. Midway through the lesson, the two halves swap over. Hence, though pupils make very good progress for the time they are working at a computer, they are not able to develop the skills as rapidly as they might if they could spend the whole lesson using ICT. The very good teaching skills of teachers mean that they manage the situation very well and very effective planning and preparation mean that pupils doing both the library-related tasks and the computer-related tasks are given worthwhile learning experiences.
78. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in lessons and, as a result, achieve well. They are equally confident as others in using ICT to search for information or to develop short programs to control external mechanisms, such as traffic lights.
79. Most pupils are developing good information-handling skills and many by Year 2 are already selecting information for different needs or purposes and organising it well into forms that they can use later for processing. There is good use of ICT too, throughout the school, to present information, including in the form of charts and graphs using spreadsheets, and to interrogate databases to check for patterns in data. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are developing well their knowledge and understanding of how to construct simple programs to control events. Overall, pupils are developing well a broad range of ICT based skills.

80. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was very good. Teachers have good skills in ICT and are confident about the work they are doing with pupils, hence pupils' own skills develop well. A very well-planned curriculum supports the planning of lessons so that there is a systematic and rigorous approach to developing pupils' own knowledge, confidence and skills. The cramped space in the suite is extremely well managed so that pupils' learning is maximised and time used to the full despite the drawbacks of limited equipment.
81. The subject is very well led and managed because the pupils and their learning are given high priority. The subject co-ordinator has a very positive influence on driving standards and improvement. Despite the fact that accommodation and resources hinder progress, the improvement since the last inspection has been very good. A very well-planned curriculum is now in place, all staff and pupils make use of the ICT suite, statutory requirements are now met, and standards are higher than before.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The lessons timetabled in the suite are very well planned so that the use of ICT is embedded in relevant curricular contexts. For example, the internet and well selected CD-ROMs were used very effectively in a history lesson to help pupils find out information about everyday life in Greek times. Pupils were able to extend their information-handling skills as well as to develop further their knowledge and understanding about how we use Ancient Greek ideas today. All lessons in the ICT suite are planned with clear objectives for the development of key ICT skills as well as extension of pupils' knowledge or understanding in another subject. Hence pupils are simultaneously developing new ICT skills at the same time as extending their knowledge and understanding in other subject areas. Every subject makes use of the ICT suite but, because it is small, it provides limited opportunities for whole class use. However, not enough use is made of classroom computers to demonstrate use of ICT or for pairs or small groups of pupils to work on the computer during class lessons.

HUMANITIES

Geography and history

Provision in geography and history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good in lessons and has a positive impact on learning.
- Resources are well used to promote pupils' learning and understanding.
- Use of ICT is well developed and helps to promote pupils' geographical and historical skills and knowledge.
- Literacy skills are well promoted in history.
- Some units of work are not covered in sufficient depth.

Commentary

83. Although it was only possible to observe a limited number of lessons in geography and history, these, along with a scrutiny of pupils' written work and teachers' planning documents, indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards in line with those expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and classroom assistants and make the same progress as all other pupils.
84. Though progress of pupils in lessons seen was good and they achieved well, written work shows that there is insufficient depth of coverage in some topics. This is partly a result of the newer approach being promoted whereby teachers are concentrating on developing pupils'

enquiry and investigative skills. This has not yet extended to recording discussions and what pupils have learned in sufficient depth in written work.

85. In geography, pupils in Years 1 and 2 made satisfactory progress in their knowledge of a village in Thailand and drew comparisons with the local village. This lesson was made all the more interesting by the imminent 'visit' of Barnaby Bear (the class stuffed toy) to Thailand. The teacher also used video materials in an effective manner to show life in a Thai village. In history, these pupils developed a satisfactory understanding of how things change over time as they explored a range of old and new toys and considered how the materials used and the construction has changed. Pupils also had a simple understanding of specific characters in history, such as Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale and how they had contributed to society.
86. Pupils in Year 3 during geography lessons displayed a clear understanding of their moral responsibility for the school and local environment as they carried out a survey of litter in the area. In Years 5 and 6, pupils were likewise involved in activities concerning the local environment as they considered how the village has changed over time and how best it might be improved. In history, pupils in Years 4 and 5 displayed research and computer skills as they used CD-ROMs to gather information about life in Ancient Greece. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 likewise focused on Ancient Greece as they considered the Olympic Games and similarities and differences between these and their contemporary equivalent. The good progress made in this lesson was enhanced by the teacher's use of the inter-active whiteboard to convey information to pupils.
87. An examination of teachers' planning indicates that the scheme covers all areas of the National Curriculum in both subjects, although a number of them are not covered in sufficient depth. In both geography and history, pupils are given the chance to engage in simple research activities and to gather information on the World Wide Web.
88. Teaching in the limited number of lessons observed was good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, and introductions at the beginning of lessons develop and hold the interest of pupils. Teachers use good questioning skills to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Resources are well used. Pupils are given opportunities to take part in a number of visits, locally and further afield, to support them in their studies.
89. Leadership and management are good. In the comparatively short time she has been in post, the subject co-ordinator has put effective strategies and documentation into place to support teachers in the teaching of the subjects.
90. With opportunities for pupils to consider life in different countries around the world in geography and the focus on the examination of different societies from different times in history, the subjects make a useful contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and learning.
- Teachers have a sensitive and imaginative interpretation of the locally agreed syllabus which effectively engages pupils' interests.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- There are missed opportunities for pupils to record their ideas and opinions and to develop their literacy skills in the subject.

Commentary

91. Observation in lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' written work indicate that pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in the subject throughout the school and attain standards above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus used by the school by Years 2 and 6.
92. Pupils in a mixed reception and Year 1 class developed a good understanding of the cycle of nature and were able to apply this to their own lives. The issue of the loss of a family member was handled with outstanding skill and sensitivity by the teacher, with a focus on the theme of growth, rather than the negative aspects of this issue. In a Year 1/2 lesson, pupils demonstrated good depth of understanding of the regular cycles in our lives. They responded well to Vivaldi's '*Four Seasons*' to establish the key features of each season. The good learning in the two lessons observed was enhanced by the teachers' use of resources, including music, flowers and photographs.
93. Pupils in Year 3 made good progress in their knowledge of world religions as they turned from a study of Krishna in the Hindu faith to a consideration of the life of Jesus as presented in the bible. The very good progress in this lesson was helped by the teacher's very good questioning skills and the pupils' wish to make a full and active contribution to the lesson.
94. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were involved in some very mature discussions as they considered the importance of the Western (Wailing) Wall, and the hill fort of Masada in the Jewish faith. Pupils appreciated the claim that a number of religions had on the remains of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the problems this had caused in recent history. Pupils used this experience to produce their own messages of hope for the future which were to be placed on their own wall in the classroom. Through their studies on Masada, pupils developed some understanding of how people are prepared to suffer, and even die, for their faith. Much work in religious education classes is of an oral nature, with too few opportunities for pupils to record their ideas and opinions in a written form.
95. Although not directly observed, teachers' planning reveals that pupils are given the chance to respond to the required areas of work in the locally agreed syllabus used by the school, with the school focusing on the Christian, Jewish and Hindu faiths. Pupils consider the prophets, celebrations, special books and places of worship of these faiths and come to appreciate how they impact on peoples' lives. The quality of teaching in the subject is good, and some very good teaching was observed during the inspection. Lessons are very well planned, organised and managed and teachers use resources in an effective manner to extend pupils' learning and understanding.
96. School assemblies make a positive contribution to the subject; themes and issues are extended in class activities. The good links between the local church and the school also make a good contribution to the subject.
97. Leadership and management in the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has put into place good documentation and strategies to help teachers in the development and teaching of the subject. There is regular monitoring and evaluation and feedback to staff on how provision can be improved. With the chance for pupils to consider religions within their cultural environment and the opportunity to consider rights, wrongs and responsibilities, the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- The range of learning opportunities is good.
- There are good links with other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

98. Art and design has improved since the last inspection. Standards in the subject are above the national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well throughout the school due to a well-planned curriculum supported by an effective scheme of work. Those with special educational needs also achieve well. From discussions with pupils, the school knows what skills pupils have and what they need to learn next. Sketchbooks are used to good effect. Pupils carefully record observation work and, by Year 6, pupils work well together to develop two- and three-dimensional projects. This is reflected in the puppets that were on display.
99. From the small amount of teaching seen and pupils' comments during the inspection, it is evident that teaching is good and that pupils enjoy art and design and readily tackle tasks. In one lesson, the pace was brisk, learning and the development of skills were good, expectations were high and there was a purposeful atmosphere. Pupils worked with sustained concentration and produced good quality work.
100. The subject is well managed. Art and design is linked to other subjects and the monitoring of the quality of work is also good. Pupils have the opportunity to study different artists, for example Van Gough and William Morris, and this inspires new ideas and techniques. The art and craft club enriches the art and design opportunities for pupils. Overall, the subject contributes very well to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are provided with a challenging curriculum which stretches them very well. As a result they are making very good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the subject are very good.
- The leadership is very well focused on getting the best out of pupils and to produce the highest standards of work.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and national curriculum requirements are now well met.

Commentary

101. By the time pupils are in Year 6, their attainment is well above average, and is particularly good in relation to their understanding of mechanisms and structures. Achievement is very good and pupils with special educational needs gain significantly from their experiences in design and technology. Their attainment is often high, and all achieve very well. Attainment for pupils by Year 2 is above average and their achievement is also very good.
102. The quality of pupils' written work is high because they have good opportunities for developing their design and research work. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have good quality design folders with work often at the level usually seen in secondary schools. Able pupils produce very good graphic representations of their proposed designs and have ambitious ideas about what they

will make. Lower attainers also produce graphic work of very reasonable quality for age. Pupils across the school pay good attention to the quality of finish to their products. Overall, pupils' skills in making and designing are developing very well as a direct result of the drive given by the subject co-ordinator.

103. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have developed good skills in this area and are confident about teaching design and technology. The subject is very well led and managed by a co-ordinator who is determined to maintain a high profile for it across the school. Her influence on the development of the subject and on the standards of pupils' work is very strong. A very well developed curriculum ensures that pupils cover the National Curriculum requirements in depth. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Very good use is now made of ICT in design and technology, and this contributes well to pupils' learning in relation to design and research work but also in terms of how electronic systems operate to control events.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in music and, by Year 6, they attain well-above-average standards.
- The quality of teaching is at least good and for older pupils it is very good.
- Learning objectives and assessment are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels.
- Very good extra-curricular activities and events enhance pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

104. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well and attain above-average standards by the time they are in Year 2. They know a wide range of musical instruments and the sounds they make, identifying a variety of percussion instruments accurately by listening to sounds including when two are played together. They know how to play them to produce high, low, loud, quiet, long and short notes and how to describe the notes they play. In Years 5 and 6, the achievements of pupils are very good and they reach well-above-average standards. They sing with good attention to clear diction, effectively evaluating each others' performance. They have a good understanding of music notation and can follow a tune on sheet music. Overall, pupils make good progress when performing in groups to produce chords on tuned percussion instruments and when accompanying a recording of the music by following the sheet music. They understand the musical elements of tempo, dynamics and pitch. Some pupils who have additional tuition in playing instruments achieve very good standards. Pupils who are members of the school choir are keen and quickly achieve good performances, as they improve expression and rhythm through enjoyable practises.
105. Teaching is good overall. In Years 1 and 2, lessons are well planned and structured to involve pupils in progressively more challenging tasks. With good use of praise and well-organised group activities, pupils are keenly interested, learn from each other and make good progress. Skilled teaching in Years 5 and 6 effectively motivates pupils and they respond with enthusiasm and concentration to well-structured, challenging tasks.
106. The subject is very well led and managed by a skilled and enthusiastic co-ordinator, and a strong tradition of whole-school musical events such as concerts and performances has been established. This effectively involves the staff in enthusiastic teamwork, creates a positive music ethos throughout the school and gives a sense of achievement in music that is shared by staff and pupils. A well-balanced curriculum programme is in place throughout the school

and staff have been enabled to develop good skills in delivering music lessons through good support and monitoring. Clear learning targets are set but these are not often linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment and, consequently, do not fully inform assessment.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a very well structured approach to learning which enables pupils to make rapid gains in skills and knowledge and understanding of the subject
- Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well.
- The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management

Commentary

107. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6 across a good range of physical activities and achievement is very good across the school. Pupils work hard in lessons and develop very good skills in being able to evaluate one another's work. By Year 6, many show very well-developed critical observation skills so that they identify not only what is being done well but what is not so good, and how it could be improved. Lesson observations indicate that pupils have well developed physical skills. They are well co-ordinated and have good control of their body movements. This was well demonstrated in a Year 4/5 dance lesson where pupils made good use of space and controlled upper and lower body movements to fit in with the theme and mood of the music.
108. Very good teaching results in pupils developing well a wide range of skills, systematically building on previous learning. Teachers plan lessons with great care and involve pupils very well in demonstrating good movements to others. The very good structured approach to teaching skills ensures that pupils have a very good understanding of what they are expected to do and learn. Lessons usually begin well with warm-up activities, followed by very well designed activities to build new skills, practise them and then put them into use through, for example, a team game. Time in lessons is very well used so that pupils' learning is maximised.
109. There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. Leadership and management are very good, and improvement since the last inspection has also been very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

110. It was only possible to observe one PSHCE lesson during the period of the inspection. Teachers' planning documents would indicate that this area of the curriculum is delivered each week to all years during '*circle time*'.
111. The single lesson observed in Years 1 and 2 was well planned, organised and managed. Following on from team building games, pupils focused on the issue of keeping animals in zoos. Pupils fully realised the rules for the lesson and the need to listen to and value each others' ideas and opinions. Through good questioning skills, pupils displayed the ability to make mature and constructive comments about this contentious issue and articulated their ideas and opinions in a logical manner. The lesson ended with an amusing warm-down activity as pupils engaged in a smiling game.
112. PSHCE is very well planned and delivered not only through discrete lessons but also through other areas of the school's work such as assemblies, visits, visitors and other subjects such

as physical education and religious education. As a result, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
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	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

