

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **EARSHAM CofE VOLUNTARY AIDED FIRST SCHOOL**

Bungay, Suffolk

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121114

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Payne

Lead inspector: Mrs Lesley Robins

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004

Inspection number: 256015

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	63
School address:	School Road Earsham Bungay Suffolk
Postcode:	NR352TF
Telephone number:	01986 892557
Fax number:	01986 893634
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Zoe Sprake

Date of previous inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Earsham is a small village school. It has 63 pupils taught in three mixed-age classes, whose composition changes each year. There are more girls than boys. Very few children come and go from the school other than at reception and Year 4, so this is a stable pupil community. The children live in Bungay and other surrounding villages. The school serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are about the same as the national picture. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. Pupils' attainment when they start school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those who have a statement outlining particular needs, is above the national average. The pupils' special needs centre mostly round moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds, with a very small number from other minority ethnic groups. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school has had four different head teachers since its last inspection. Half of the teachers joined the school in the past two years.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
5848	Lesley Robins	Lead inspector	English, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, music, special educational needs
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
20948	John Linstead	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Limited**

Inspection Division

Langshaw

Pastens Road

Oxted

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RH8 ORE

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Earsham is a good school** that provides good value for money. After a period of instability, pupils are now achieving well, because this is a very inclusive school. Standards have improved recently and are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. Teaching and learning are good. The leadership of the school is good. The unsatisfactory accommodation will be improved with the building of a new school. Parents hold the school in high esteem and the pupils enjoy school very much.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science
- Teaching and learning are good, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning, and some over-reliance on unhelpful worksheets
- The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour make a strong contribution to their achievement
- The school is well led by the head teacher and governors, but the development of subjects is not managed well enough
- The school's outstanding partnership with parents provides excellent support for pupils' learning
- The support staff make a very significant contribution to the pupils' learning
- Some weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum are limiting the achievements of the youngest children

**Since the school was inspected in 1998, improvement has been satisfactory.** During a period of significant staffing instability, following the last inspection, standards declined. However, they have improved recently and are now better than they were in 1998. Three of the issues arising from the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. The use of assessment, flexibility in grouping pupils to promote effective learning, and multi-cultural education are all much better. The school continues to work conscientiously on its curriculum planning but weaknesses remain, notably in the Foundation Stage. Subject leaders are still not making a strong enough contribution to developing their subjects.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	E	D	B	B
writing	D	C	A*	A*
mathematics	D	A	B	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 similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

**Pupils' achievement is good.** Achievement for the children in the reception year is satisfactory, and they achieve well in their early reading, writing and social skills. Most children reach most of the goals expected nationally by the time they join Year 1. Throughout the rest of the school, the pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is good. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, except in writing in Year 2, standards are above average in these subjects. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are good and they have well developed understanding of scientific processes. However, the pupils' presentation of their work is sometimes careless. Their information and communication technology skills are as expected for their ages and the oldest pupils are beginning to achieve well. Overall, pupils of all abilities are enabled to

achieve well because their needs are accurately identified and their progress monitored carefully.

**The pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** The pupils are very eager to learn and behave very well. Relationships are very harmonious. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good.**

**Teaching and learning are good.** The teachers plan their lessons well. Interesting activities and good encouragement to the pupils mean that they engage well with their learning and work hard. The teamwork between teachers and support staff is extremely effective. It ensures that pupils' needs are met, even though the age and ability range in each class is often quite wide. An over-reliance on unsuitable or undemanding worksheets sometimes limits the pupils' progress. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to think about their own learning and how they can improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Flexible curriculum planning helps the pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science. For such a small school, there is a good range of after-school clubs. Very good links with other schools when children join and leave make for a very smooth transition. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage takes insufficient account of the need for these very young children to learn through well-structured play and exploration. Planning for art and design and technology does not identify well enough the skills the pupils are to develop. There are serious deficiencies in the school's accommodation, which will be remedied with the new building. The staff make good use of the available space and other local facilities to provide the best they can for the pupils' learning. The school provides good care and support for its pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** Governance is good. The governors have led the school successfully through a difficult time. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and are very supportive. They work well in partnership with the head teacher to shape the future direction of the school. The head teacher leads the school well. She has successfully gained the trust of the staff, governors and parents and has established a strong sense of teamwork in the school. Management is effective. Subject leaders, however, are not rigorous enough in checking standards and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

The parents have nothing but praise for the school, and are keen to be part of its continued improvement. They value the approachability of the staff and the high level of care their children receive. The pupils like their school very much and enjoy their time there.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Improve some aspects of provision for children in the Foundation Stage
- Increase the pupils' involvement in assessing their own learning, and in identifying and reviewing their own targets
- Strengthen the roles of subject leaders in checking and improving standards and quality in their subjects
- Reduce the use of worksheets that are not well matched to the pupils' needs



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils' achievement is good overall. The reception children achieve satisfactory standards. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 achieve well and, overall, reach standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement has improved recently and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science
- Children in the reception year achieve well in reading, writing and their social skills, but satisfactorily in other areas of their learning
- The school is very good at ensuring that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well
- There are weaknesses in the pupils' presentation of their work

#### **Commentary**

1. When children join the school in reception, they have average skills and knowledge. Good teaching enables the pupils to reach above average standards by Year 4. This represents good achievement for the pupils, and an improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be average with pupils making satisfactory progress.
2. The performance of one pupil can have a significant impact on the school's overall results because each pupil counts for a high percentage. However, there was a significant decline in the test results following the last inspection. This was due mainly to many staffing changes in the school. In the last two years, with better stability and more secure leadership, standards have started to rise again.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.5 (15.2)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.5 (14.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.3 (18.3)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Standards and achievement are good by the end of Year 2, except in writing, currently, where fewer pupils are achieving above average standards. However, these pupils read well and are generally articulate. Their mathematical skills are good and their scientific understanding very good.
4. By the end of Year 4, the pupils read expressively and their writing is often lively, with good use of vocabulary. In mathematics, the pupils have good mental calculation skills. In science, they gain good understanding of scientific process and build up their knowledge base well.
5. Throughout the school, in English and mathematics, however, the pupils' presentation of their work is sometimes careless. Handwriting and spelling accuracy are sometimes weak. The pupils' ICT skills are improving, but hampered by limited access to computers.
6. The reception children make good progress in reading, writing and social skills, because of the good teaching in these areas of learning. However, they are not achieving equally well in other areas of learning. For example, insufficient opportunities for exploration and investigation limit their progress in developing knowledge and understanding of the world. Limited

opportunities to make choices about activities, resources and equipment, show the children's independent learning skills.

7. The very careful tracking processes recently introduced mean that the needs of individual pupils, including those with special needs and the very able pupils, are accurately identified. Simple but effective plans promote their progress well. The involvement of all adults, including parents, ensures the pupils' good achievement.
8. There is insufficient evidence to make secure judgements about standards in other subjects. However, some good work in design and technology was seen in Years 1 and 2.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school. Personal development is good. The school promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development very well and their spiritual development satisfactorily. Attendance and punctuality are good. These are strengths that the school has maintained since its last inspection. The school has improved its provision for the pupils' multi-cultural education.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is extremely successful in creating a harmonious environment in which all pupils work and play very co-operatively together
- Pupils are very eager to learn and behave very well
- The school provides very good opportunities to develop the multi-cultural dimension of pupils' learning
- Pupils are not always given the chance to reflect on their experiences

### **Commentary**

9. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with each other. Incidents of bullying or any other form of harassment are extremely rare. This is because the school works exceptionally well to establish a climate in which everyone is encouraged to respect and value everyone else. Pupils are very effectively prepared for the arrival of newcomers, such as those with particular needs or from different cultural backgrounds. Staff take great care in grouping and pairing pupils so that they learn to work constructively with others, such as older with younger or more-able with less-able. As a result, they learn to help others on their own initiative. For example, in a computer lesson for Years 3 and 4, one boy assisted another who was struggling to put text into a box. Mid-day supervisors are very skilled at sorting out any problems at lunchtime, supported by older pupils who act as playground buddies. Parents are very pleased with the way in which their children are taught to care for each other.
10. Pupils are very keen and motivated in their lessons. This is an important factor in their overall good achievement. The youngest children pay very good attention to the adults who are supporting them. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are often highly involved in their learning, especially in practical lessons such as science when they are involved in experimenting, observing and researching. Because they are enthusiastic about learning and relate very well to each other and to adults, their behaviour is very good. The headteacher has established a very firm and clear expectation of how pupils should behave, for example through the three simple school rules that are constantly reinforced. She works most successfully with parents to deal with the occasional situation when a child's behaviour falls short of the school's high standards. There have been no exclusions.
11. The school has responded very well to the key issue at the last inspection to improve provision for multi-cultural education. The headteacher is strongly committed to providing pupils with real-life opportunities to engage with the diversity of other cultures within Britain. For example, there has been a successful link, including e-mail contact and a visit, with an inner-city school in London. A new link is now developing with a multi-ethnic school in Ipswich. Resources and artefacts have been purchased to reflect more fully different backgrounds and faiths. Pupils have taken part in multi-

cultural events, sometimes in association with other schools. They have good opportunities to learn about the culture in which they live, for example through strong links with the church and the village. They learn effectively about faiths, traditions and languages around the world. A notable feature is their involvement in a Norfolk church school project, which raises funds towards a school for handicapped children in India.

12. Pupils' personal development is promoted effectively throughout the school, as it was in the last inspection. Children of reception age make good progress in developing their confidence. They learn to listen to others and take turns. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 applauded each other spontaneously in a demonstration of country dancing and organised their belongings very well at the end of the school day. The oldest pupils have some good opportunities to take responsibility, such as through the Year 4 playground committee, which organised games one lunchtime during the inspection. The school is very appropriately implementing a plan to develop their independence further. Drama makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development by giving them the chance to perform, or assist back-stage, in regular events and celebrations in the church. The school's involvement in a recycling project and development of a nature corner in the playground successfully encourage respect for the environment. Assemblies contribute soundly to pupils' personal development by linking moral teaching to the Christian faith and children's own experiences. However, opportunities are missed, both in assemblies and in lessons, to involve pupils in reflecting more deeply on issues raised.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

13. Attendance in the reporting year above (2002/3) was above the national average. Unauthorised absence remains below average. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is good, and often very good because their parents comply very well with the expectation not to go away on term-time holidays. The school secretary records and monitors attendance effectively and liaises well with families, including those from the Traveller community.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall. Careful curriculum planning for pupils in years 1 to 4 enables them to achieve well, but there are weaknesses in the curriculum for the reception children. Key skills in literacy and numeracy are developed will as part of work in other subjects. ICT skills across the curriculum are satisfactory. Good systems are in place for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Pupils are cared for and supported well. The school has an excellent partnership with parents, and very good links with the community, and with other schools.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good. This reflects improvement from the last inspection. Assessment is improving. Good planning and effective teamwork between teachers and support staff help all pupils to learn well. Teaching for the reception children is satisfactory and good for pupils in Years 1 to 4.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Well planned lessons ensure that pupil's different needs are effectively met
- Teachers and support staff work together very effectively
- Good encouragement and interesting activities motivate the pupils and help them to work hard

- Good questioning develops the pupils' understanding
- In some lessons, an over-reliance on inappropriate or undemanding worksheets limits the pupils' learning
- Pupils have insufficient opportunity to reflect on their own learning

### **Commentary**

14. The teachers plan their lessons effectively thinking carefully about their pupils' needs and how best to meet them. They use different activities or different groupings for pupils of varying abilities to ensure that tasks are appropriately challenging. This enables the pupils to make good progress in most lessons. Resources, such as place value cards in mathematics and real objects for experiments in science, are used well to enhance the pupils' learning. The role of support staff is also carefully planned. They understand well what the pupils are to learn, working very skilfully with them and the teachers, and contributing very helpfully to assessments of the pupils' progress.

15. The teachers consistently encourage the pupils, so that they are keen to try hard and do well. Good management of the pupils underpinned by very good relationships, helps them stay focused on their work. Interesting activities engage the pupils well. A lively story from the Caribbean prompted some imaginative writing by the older pupils. The search for 'minibeasts' and then examining them under a digital microscope promoted good, active learning in science. The teachers' good questioning stimulates the pupils' thinking and successfully strengthens their understanding. In mathematics, for example, this gives the pupils good opportunities to explain their methods and share ideas.
16. In English, the teachers often provide worksheets for the pupils to apply and practise new things they have learned. Most pupils complete these appropriately. However, it was noticeable in examples of work that the less able pupils often do not finish these sheets because they are not well matched to these pupils' needs and this is an unsatisfactory experience for them. In science and geography, the use of worksheets restricts the opportunity for pupils write findings and accounts in their own words. Some worksheets given to the reception children were too hard for them.
17. There is some very effective tracking of pupils' progress. Lessons successfully build on previous ones. However, the pupils have insufficient opportunity to think about their own learning and how to improve. Although marking of pupils' work is often helpful, it does not always relate to any targets that might have been set for the pupils or point out clear ways forward for them. In the end of lesson 'plenaries', there are too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own or each other's work.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	10	8	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, as was the case in the last inspection. The needs of the wide range of abilities are well met. There are weaknesses in the curriculum for the youngest children. The good staffing levels and very effective teamwork support the curriculum well. Accommodation is unsatisfactory but will be improved when the new school is built.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and very good for those with a statement
- For such a small school, there is good provision for learning outside the school day
- The support staff contribute significantly to the quality of the curriculum
- The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage does not encourage all aspects of their learning well enough
- Activities in art and design and technology are not planned well enough
- The accommodation is cramped and lacks important facilities

**Commentary**

18. Careful curriculum planning ensures that the pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science. Flexible grouping for lessons, either by age or ability, is working well. This is particularly evident in mathematics, ICT and science. The school has identified some gifted and talented pupils and makes sound provision for them in English and mathematics, so that they achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. These pupils have also benefited from an activity day for more-able children at Bungay Middle School. Traveller children who recently joined the school are making confident progress. The needs of the increasing number of pupils with special educational needs are well met. They are very successfully included in the full range of school activities and achieve well. The pupils with a statement of special

educational need are doing particularly well. Dual placement arrangements between a special school and Earsham are very effective. Some good cross-curricular links make the curriculum relevant and interesting for the pupils. For example, the oldest pupils had made their own 'Eden Project' display, using recycled materials, which effectively linked their work in science and DT.

19. The school has a good programme of after school clubs, which makes effective use of the range of expertise of the staff. The clubs are changed each half term so that there is variety for the pupils and activities that will appeal to both boys and girls. They include origami, sports' activities, sewing, knitting, computer club and recorders. The contribution of the support staff to the curriculum is a significant strength. Each teaching assistant effectively fulfils a curriculum responsibility in areas such as ICT, dance and drama and speech therapy. Their work enriches the pupils' learning and helps alleviate the workload for the teachers in this small school.
20. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage takes insufficient account of their developmental and learning needs. Although the children make good progress in reading, writing and in their social development, they do not have enough opportunities for exploration, well-structured play, or making their own choices about their learning. As a result, their achievement is satisfactory overall, rather than good. The school is very sensibly reviewing its curriculum planning for subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Currently, the plans for art and design and for design and technology identify the topics and activities to be covered but do not describe the skills to be developed through these activities.
21. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory, as was the case in the last inspection. The space is very cramped, which makes practical activities difficult. There is no staff room or school hall and very limited facilities for physical education. The headteacher shares an extremely small office with the school secretary. Inadequate provision for outdoor learning for the youngest children restricts opportunities for physical development and for learning through play. Because of the lack of space, there are few computers, and storage for equipment for practical subjects is very difficult. The staff cope admirably with these conditions. They make very good use of the available space and local facilities to provide the best they can for the children's learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Provision of support, advice and guidance is very good. These are strengths the school has maintained since its last inspection. Pupils are satisfactorily involved in the work and development of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very effective support and guidance, based on the school's knowledge of individual needs and systematic monitoring of academic achievement and personal development help all pupils to achieve well
- All staff are trained in first aid and pupils are very well supervised at lunchtime
- Pupils' views are increasingly being sought and acted upon, but pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting and reviewing targets for their own learning

### **Commentary**

22. A strength of this very small school is the way in which it combines the advantage of staff knowing individual children very well, with the rigour of formally tracking pupils' academic and personal progress every half term. Class teachers are, therefore, able to identify quickly any pupil who is not progressing as expected and put in place appropriate action. The school successfully uses a wide range of strategies to meet pupils' needs. These include the very effective support provided by teaching assistants, especially for pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school makes very effective use of external expertise to address needs such as speech and language difficulties. It has worked extremely well with support from the Traveller Education Service to

integrate the small group of Traveller pupils. The school very appropriately explores different ways of raising achievement, such as implementing extra daily short revision sessions in mathematics for Year 3 pupils or hiring a young football coach to be a role model for boys in literacy lessons.

23. Pupils are well looked after throughout the school day. All staff know what to do in the event of any accidents or if they have any concerns about a child. The headteacher and responsible governor have been properly trained in local child protection procedures. Local authority guidance and checklists are used well to monitor health and safety matters. Good levels of supervision enable the children to play safely and happily at lunchtime.
24. The school conducted a survey of pupils' views last November, which indicated that they would like more play equipment. This has been purchased, with Year 4 pupils involved in running events to raise some of the funds required. Pupils with special educational needs are starting to be asked to contribute to their individual education plans. Across the school, however, pupils are not as well involved as they could be in reflecting on what they have learnt, how well they have done and what they could do to achieve even better.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with parents are excellent. Links with other schools and colleges are very good and those with the community are good. Overall, these judgements reflect an improvement from the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parental support is very high and a key factor in pupils' achievement
- The school provides parents with very good information and consults with them very well
- The school works successfully with other schools and colleges to benefit the pupils
- The school makes very good use of external resources, but its current building and site do not enable it to offer facilities to the community

### **Commentary**

25. Parents' responses to the questionnaire and at the pre-inspection meeting were overwhelmingly positive. Parents' backing for the school is outstanding. They see themselves very much as part of the school community working together for the benefit of the children. Parents are keen for their children to attend school. They encourage them very well in their learning, for example by hearing them read at home. Events organised by the Parents' and Teachers' Association are very well supported so that vital funds have been raised for the school at times of financial difficulty.
26. The school recognises and responds very well to the parents' need for high quality and frequent information about how well their children are progressing and what they are learning. The headteacher and staff are deliberately accessible to parents before and after school. A whiteboard outside school displays very useful information about what is going on each day. Helpful outline curriculum plans are sent home half termly. Parent-teacher consultation evenings and 'open sessions' to view children's work are well attended. Annual reports provide detailed information about pupils' progress and are supplemented very effectively by interim reports which parents receive mid-year. In addition to extensive consultation when she took up the post, the headteacher has instituted termly meetings with parents to share wider issues and seek their views, for example on provision for sex and drugs' education. The school works very closely with individual parents and families to ensure that their children can make the best possible progress.
27. The school actively seeks partnerships with other schools that smooth the transition for pupils when they are joining or leaving, and extend their experiences. Good links with pre-school groups and home visits by the reception staff provide early assessment information before children start. Parents are very pleased with the transfer arrangements to the middle school

and confirm that their children settle in very well to Year 5. This is due to a number of opportunities provided for the older pupils to visit the middle school. For example, they have weekly gymnastics lessons there. They have recently enjoyed a residential trip with pupils from other feeder schools so that they have already started to make new friends. The close working relationships between staff of the two schools have helped resolve curriculum and assessment issues to ease the transfer in the middle of a National Curriculum key stage.

28. Parents confirm that the school is much valued in the local community. There are strong links with the church. For example, merit assemblies and other celebrations take place there half termly. Visits and visitors are used very effectively to enrich the curriculum and motivate the pupils. The visit of the Norwich Puppet Theatre was an inspiration for Years 1 and 2 pupils' work in design and technology. The school is successful in gaining resources from local businesses and organisations. For example, this is having a very positive impact on its provision for environmental education. The school's present accommodation is not suitable for use by the local community, which would strengthen links further, but the plans for the new school make provision for this.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the school is good and overall its management is effective, as was the case in the last inspection. The headteacher provides good leadership and management and has created a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff. Governors carry out their roles well, supporting as well as challenging the work of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors are providing good support and helping shape the direction of the school
- The headteacher has high aspirations and a clear vision of how the school will continue to improve
- There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school
- The roles of subject leaders are not developed sufficiently

### **Commentary**

29. The governing body has provided stability and sensitive support through recent times of staffing difficulties. A good committee structure is bolstered by the input of governors with expertise, for example in finance and social services. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They challenge if necessary as well as support the work of the school. They play a significant part in shaping school development. For example, they gave careful and informed consideration to the decision to apply for special funds to help build a new school. Governors discuss carefully the draft school development plan presented to them by the head teacher. They also check on their own performance and make plans for their own development. The school's finances are well managed and spending closely linked to the priorities identified in the improvement plan.
30. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school and a determination to raise standards as high as they can go. She fulfils the role of special needs co-ordinator very effectively, as well as carrying a significant class teaching commitment. The headteacher has created a very strong sense of teamwork and the commitment of the school staff is a strength of the school. She keeps governors informed through well-structured reports.
31. The management of the school is effective. All members of staff have subject responsibilities. Teaching assistants also have responsibilities, rarely found in schools, for areas such as ICT, staff welfare, art and drama. The main weakness at present in the management of the school is in the checking by subject leaders of the quality of teaching and learning and the standards being achieved. This was an issue raised in the last inspection. They carry out annual checks on their subjects but these lack sufficient detail and do not lead to specific improvement plans. Most have been in post a



short time and one is a newly qualified teacher. They are though, keen and hard working. The head teacher is helpfully establishing a framework for the development of their roles.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	228,353
Total expenditure	220,915
Expenditure per pupil	3,507

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	21,882
Balance carried forward to the next	7,438

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

32. At the time of the inspection, there were ten reception children taught in a class with ten Year 1 pupils. Children enter the reception class with broadly average attainment. Satisfactory teaching enables most children to make sound progress. They attain the expected levels in most areas of learning by the end of the reception year. The children achieve well in aspects of their personal and social development and communication skills. The teacher is well supported by a learning support assistant. Together they have created a positive atmosphere for learning. The assessment of children's attainment and progress is very good. The adults make detailed notes on individual children. Children not making the expected gains are noted and appropriate measures taken to help. This careful tracking is clearly reported to parents.
33. These findings are broadly similar to those in the school's last inspection. However, the children's achievements in their early reading, writing and social skills are better than was the case last time.
34. There is insufficient evidence to make detailed judgements on each area of learning. What follows is a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses in the provision.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children's speaking and listening skills are good because the adults take many opportunities to develop them
- Children have a good knowledge of the sounds letters make, and they write well
- The assessment and tracking of children's progress is very good
- The adults work well together to the benefit of the children; staff and children enjoy warm relationships
- The curriculum does not encourage some aspects of children's learning, such as independence and exploration, well enough
- The cramped conditions and the lack of an outdoor learning area are restricting children's progress

#### **Commentary**

35. The organisation of the class and the planning of work are not to the best advantage of children in the Foundation Stage. The children are mostly given work more suitable for older pupils. Activities and teaching methods used are not, therefore, always appropriate. There are too few opportunities for children to play, to learn through a range of practical activities and games, or to choose activities for themselves. The accommodation also restricts the extent to which the school can offer different areas of interest commonly available to Foundation Stage children. For example, children cannot 'dip in' to an easily accessed display of books, readily engage in role play and dressing up, or use equipment freely in an outside learning area. Overall, there is too much adult-directed work and insufficient child-initiated activities. This was a weakness identified in the last inspection.
36. In their **personal, social and emotional development**, the children settle quickly into the day-to-day routines and soon establish warm relationships with their friends and teachers. By the time they join Year 1, the majority are reaching most of the goals expected for their age. Children behave very well, share equipment and take turns. When given the opportunity, they work well with their partners or in a group. The adults value each child's efforts and give lots of individual praise and encouragement. They know the children very well and treat them with respect. Children are confident and to some extent independent, even though they have little choice in their learning, for example by choosing activities. Children follow instructions well, behave sensibly and show consideration for the feelings of others.

37. In **communication, language and literacy**, virtually all children are likely to achieve the standard expected by the end of reception, with some already working at Year 1 levels in their writing. Teachers make good use of every opportunity to stimulate children's speech. They ask open-ended questions and encourage children to speak clearly. Children listen well and respond quickly to questions or instructions. Reading is valued. The adults promote a love of books through reading stories and encouraging parents to read with and to their children. Reading records show this is successful and children have read many books since joining the school. Most know that text carries meaning, can describe main story settings and identify characters in the stories. Standards in writing are good with several children now writing independently. The school successfully teaches children the sounds letters make, which helps them decipher words and spell common ones correctly. The limited accommodation restricts the extent to which the school can provide areas for learning in the classroom. For example, this affects the storage and display of books, and the provision of role-play and dressing up areas where children could develop their communication skills further.
38. In their **mathematical development**, most children count accurately to ten, and some beyond this. Children learn to recognise and recreate patterns and know the names of common colours. They name shapes such as 'square' and 'cube' and successfully compare, sort, match, order and sequence. During the inspection, children recognised that bubbles were 'spheres' and named the different shapes of the wands they were using.
39. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, the children learn about other countries, religions and more generally about why things happen and how things work. Much of the recorded work is on worksheets, often more suitable for older pupils. During the inspection, work given to children involving maps was too difficult and not suited to the children's experiences or stage of development. On the other hand, when taught as a separate group, the children made good progress in a lesson investigating 'bubbles'. Here, their learning needs were properly catered for. Varied and stimulating activities helped the children learn well. Children have limited access to computers but they have produced pictures using a paint program and some assembled scenes involving knights and damsels. They enjoy using construction kits, for example making caravans, sunglasses and a beach hut for work associated with the theme of 'things at the seaside'.
40. In their **physical development**, children make satisfactory progress. Standards for the majority, in most aspects of physical development, are likely to be in line with the levels expected when they join Year 1. The school has a playground that children use to ride tricycles, use string stilts and throw and catch balls. However, there is no secure area with a soft landing zone or large equipment. This restricts the progress children can make in developing balancing, climbing and the other skills associated with these experiences. There is also a lack of other outside play and water toys. Within the classroom, the adults plan activities such as cutting with scissors and using pencils and paintbrushes, which satisfactorily promote children's manipulative skills.
41. The children enjoy a range of creative activities that support their **creative development**. They make collages and use paint and crayon to make pictures, for example of seascapes and sand patterns. In one lesson, they successfully used a range of tools and techniques to colour and decorate their 'rainbow fish', although the activity was rather limiting. The more capable children show good imagination, especially in their choice of decoration. Children's early attempts at drawing, for example of people, are somewhat immature, but these improve and most children produce recognisable faces with most features present. Children have combined different materials well to make collages and paintings in which they have mixed their own colours.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved recently and, by Year 4, are above average
- Good teaching helps the pupils to achieve well
- Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection
- Presentation, handwriting and accuracy in spelling are not good enough
- The development of the subject is not managed well enough

#### **Commentary**

42. The 2003 national test results for pupils at the end of Year 2 were much better than in previous years. They were above the national average and compared well with those for similar schools.
43. In the current Year 2, the pupils are achieving good standards in speaking and listening, and in reading but standards in writing are weaker. Fewer pupils are reaching above average standards in writing. This mainly is a reflection of the abilities of this particular group of pupils.
44. Pupils' work shows that these above-average standards in the tests are sustained through Years 3 and 4. The pupils read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books accurately and expressively. The oldest pupils are successfully developing the skills of skimming, scanning, inference and deduction. The good range in the pupils' writing includes stories, poems, factual accounts, newspaper reports, book reviews, writing from different viewpoints and different interpretations of traditional stories. The pupils' writing is often lively, with a good sense of audience.
45. The main features of the good teaching and learning are
  - Well planned lessons build on previous learning
  - Good questioning and discussion draw out the pupils' thinking
  - Good management of the pupils, underpinned by very good relationships, helps them stay focused on their work
  - Very good use of other adults ensures that pupils of different abilities make good progress in lessons
  - Good subject knowledge helps teachers set good pace and challenge in the work
46. A relative weakness is the pupils' lack of involvement in assessing their own learning. The teachers' marking of their pupils' work is often helpful but not always clearly linked to targets that have been set for them. In the reviews at the ends of lessons, there are too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own or each other's work. Pupils have too few opportunities to identify and review their targets for themselves.
47. The good standards in speaking and listening found in the last inspection have been maintained. Aspects of teaching and learning have also improved since then. The pupils read more expressively. They use words that are more adventurous in their writing. Achievement is better because of improved assessment and more flexible groupings of pupils. Planning for the different needs and abilities of the pupils is much better. Sometimes however, the worksheets provided for the less-able pupils are too hard with the result that they do not finish them and this is an unsatisfactory experience for these pupils.
48. Handwriting and presentation, although beginning to improve, are still not as good as they could be. There is an element of carelessness in the pupils' work. Although phonics and spelling rules are taught and learned well, the pupils sometimes forget to apply these when writing simple words. Sometimes, not enough use is made of computers in lessons for independent, extended writing, and this was an issue raised in the last inspection.

49. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been some useful work on improving resources for English. Outcomes from training have been shared with colleagues. There has been sensible action to identify and use materials from the National Literacy Strategy that will most benefit the pupils. However, there is no rigorous work on checking and improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

50. Language and literacy skills across the curriculum are good. Pupils of all abilities benefit from good opportunities to express their thoughts and ideas in different subjects. For example, in mathematics and science they explain their thinking well. They are competent readers and writers in other subjects. Sometimes though, the use of undemanding worksheets, in geography for example, limits opportunities for pupils to write more extended pieces for themselves.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well, reaching above average standards
- Teaching is consistently good
- Pupils have good attitudes to mathematics and learn well
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection
- The development of the subject is not managed well enough

#### **Commentary**

51. In the 2003 national tests, Year 2 pupils achieved above average standards. Preliminary results for 2004 indicate that standards have been maintained, with more pupils reaching the higher levels. Inspection evidence confirms this picture with pupils currently working at above expected levels by Year 2 and Year 4. This represents good achievement.
52. The pupils' mental skills are good. They effectively learn a variety of ways of calculating. In the infant class, pupils use rounding, doubling and halving to mentally calculate successfully. For example, in one lesson seen, Year 2 pupils carried out two-stage calculations, doubling numbers such as 79 and then deducting 11. By Year 4, pupils use partitioning, increased knowledge of 'tables' and place value to solve problems involving larger numbers. For example, they confidently made a variety of calculations involving parts of a 360-degree turn. These oldest pupils have good knowledge of the classification of angles and recognise obtuse, acute and reflex angles. They also make good estimations of the sizes of angles and then measure accurately using protractors.
53. Teaching and learning are good. Effective teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants greatly enhances pupils' learning. During the inspection, good use was made of visiting students to give pupils a lot of individual attention. The well-planned lessons are effectively based on good assessments of pupils' progress. Work is matched well to the different capabilities of pupils. Teaching groups are fluid so that pupils may move between groups according to need and progress. Lively, enthusiastic teaching means that pupils are keen to work and enjoy what they do. Resources are used well to support learning. In one lesson, pupils used simple but effective place value cards. These helped them 'see' the numbers their teacher was using and then to calculate and assemble their 'answers.' In another class, pupils made good use of a projected image on a large screen to help them learn how to use a protractor. The pupils made rapid gains in their learning and quickly became confident users of these instruments. Teachers make good use of questions to deepen understanding, check on progress and model 'answers' for other pupils. This also gives pupils the opportunities to speak and listen, explain their methods and share their ideas.
54. There are some weaknesses in the teaching and learning. Although, in lessons, teachers help pupils to see where they might have gone wrong, their marking of the pupils' work adds little to pupils' knowledge of how they could improve. The teachers praise and correct but seldom model 'answers'

or set short-term targets to further improve learning. There is also a weakness in the presentation of work. The pupils do not always set out their work sufficiently accurately and neatly. The teachers pay too little attention to this. Information and communication technology is used appropriately in many lessons, but the limited number of computers restricts the amount of 'hands on' experience pupils get.

55. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject has improved well since the last inspection with standards having been maintained in Year 2 and raised in Year 4. Assessment, including the analysis of test results, has improved and pupils' progress is well tracked. The planning of work has also improved with good use made of national guidance and the school's assessment procedures. Checking on the standards of teaching and learning is insufficient. There is an annual check on general matters but this is not rigorous enough to help form a detailed improvement plan.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

56. Mathematical skills are developed adequately in other subjects. In geography, pupils make maps and use coordinates to pinpoint places, learn compass points and directions. In history, pupils have looked at Roman numerals. In science, measurements are made and graphs of results constructed.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and the pupils achieve well
- Teaching is good overall
- Pupils enjoy their work and learn well
- An over reliance on worksheets is limiting the pupils' recording skills
- The development of the subject is not managed well enough

#### **Commentary**

57. By Year 2 and Year 4, pupils reach above average standards and their achievement is good. Well-planned work enables pupils' understanding to deepen in most of the different aspects of the subject. For example, pupils in Year 1 learn the different parts of the human body and correctly label diagrams of these. By Year 4, pupils have extended their knowledge and identify individual bones and joints. In Year 1, pupils use magnets to test which materials they attract. In Year 4, pupils use two magnets to test attraction and repulsion and try to come to conclusions about what those materials attracted have in common.
58. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were very good. The pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to carry out experiments and develop their observation skills. Pupils learn from an early age what a fair test is. They gradually develop their investigative skills including predicting and some accounting for their results. The poor quality of the pupils' written work rather disguises the depth of what they know which becomes apparent in their answers and discussions in lessons. This is because there is an over reliance on worksheets which restricts the opportunities pupils have to record what they have done and account for their findings. Although pupils carry out a good number of experiments and investigations, worksheets often require only a tick or a limited response. Some worksheets closely direct pupils' activities, leaving little room for their own ideas such as setting up tests to try out their own ideas.
59. The teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan stimulating activities, which engross pupils and ensure they make good progress in lessons. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 scoured the school grounds for 'minibeasts' before examining them under a digital microscope. Others used the computer to record what they had found out about the habitat of different animals, while others took a close look at the conditions favoured by worms. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 carried out a range of activities associated with forces and pushes and pulls.

They quickly became excited and engrossed in rolling cars down ramps, manipulating Play dough to show different forces, while others used the computer and a quiz to extend their understanding of the topic. Teaching assistants play a vital role in these lessons, enabling small groups to be formed and individual pupils given the help and encouragement they need.

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been good improvement since the last inspection when standards were in line with expectations. Teaching and the planning of work have improved. The checking on the quality of teaching and learning and the standard of pupils' work are not sufficient however and the role of the subject leader not developed enough. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory but tends to concentrate on what pupils can remember rather than the scientific skills they are developing.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are improving
- The pupils do not do enough work in control technology
- The subject is well supported
- The cramped conditions and the limited number of computers in the resources room sometimes slow the pace of learning

### Commentary

61. The pupils cover a good range of ICT work, and, overall, their achievement is satisfactory, as was the case in the last inspection. Their work includes word processing, desktop publishing, importing images from digital cameras, some work on simple data analysis, finding information from CD-ROM or Internet sources, emailing and PowerPoint presentations. For the oldest pupils, some of this work is above the national expectation for their age and they are achieving well in aspects of ICT. This reflects an improvement since the last inspection. The pupils are confident in their use of ICT and in particular collaborate well at the computer. They do not do sufficient work in modelling or planning instructions for programmable devices. The school has recognised this and plans are in hand to remedy the gap next year.
62. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. A member of the support staff, who takes each year group for an ICT lesson each week, does much of the teaching. This teaching enables the pupils' progress to be checked from one year group to the next. The pupils very much enjoy these sessions. Specific skills are taught well and systematically, so that they gain secure competence. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. A simple but effective self-assessment sheet for ICT is being introduced which will help the pupils check their own progress.
63. The resources room is small. It accommodates four computers and most year groups have about 12 to 14 pupils. This means that in the year group teaching sessions, pupils have to wait their turn. Although they work very well in pairs or trios, this is less than ideal and does slow the learning a little for individual pupils.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. The pupils' secure competence means that they can use ICT appropriately in different subjects. Most evident during the inspection was the use of computers and digital cameras in mathematics, science and in emailing. In a science lesson, the pupils effectively used a very appropriate programme to test their knowledge of forces. In mathematics, the oldest pupils use a simple database and create line graphs and pie charts.

## HUMANITIES

65. As only one **geography** lesson was seen, it is not possible to make a secure judgement about overall provision. However, in that lesson, standards were as expected for the pupils' age and achievement was satisfactory. Standards in the pupils' work are in line with those expected. However, most work involves the use of worksheets that often restrict and direct the responses pupils can make. When given the opportunity, pupils show an appropriate understanding of geographical enquiry. For example, pupils compare their own experiences and life styles with those of people in an Indian village and imagine themselves living there. Pupils' understanding of maps is appropriately developed and they make their own maps using symbols as well as using grid references to locate places.
66. During the inspection, no **history** lessons were seen. On the evidence of past work and discussions with staff and pupils, pupils attain standards in line with those expected. They have access to a good



range of sources and experiences with which to learn about the past. These include texts, photographs, visitors and visits and use of the Internet. Their work indicates an appropriate understanding of how things change over time, for example seaside resorts and the development of the fashions associated with them. They have compared old and new toys and board games as well as everyday objects such as irons. Pupils have devised questions to ask visitors such as a Roman soldier and Florence Nightingale and have visited Colchester Castle. They have handled and considered the uses of different artefacts developing their historical investigation skills well. On 'Roman Day', pupils had first-hand experience of dressing and eating as Romans did.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

There is not enough evidence to judge provision in art and design, design and technology, music or physical education. No art or music lessons could be seen and there was very limited evidence of the pupils' work in art and design. One design and technology lesson and one PE lesson, both in Years 1 and 2, were observed.

67. In the **design and technology** lesson seen, the pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieved above average standards. Their work on making individual puppets with a moving part based on their own designs showed originality. The pupils confidently chose the materials they needed and used a range of techniques, including cutting, sticking, sewing, and painting. They were able to explain clearly how they would make their puppets move. They showed good understanding of how to use tools safely.
68. In the **dance** lesson seen, pupils in Years 1 and 2 joined children in the Foundation Stage to practise dances and learn some new steps. Teachers and teaching assistants worked well together to encourage pupils and demonstrate the steps. Pupils and adults enjoyed the experiences and pupils learned well.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

69. No overall judgement about PSHE can be made, because not enough lessons were seen. However, the evidence indicates that provision is good. The school makes effective use of a published scheme for PSHE and there are weekly lessons in the subject. The pupils learn about right and wrong. They explore families, relationships, jobs and responsibilities.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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