

INSPECTION REPORT

PEAR TREE MEAD PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Harlow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114994

Headteacher: Helen Johnson

Lead inspector: Mr M J Cahill

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 March 2004

Inspection number: 257171

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	335
School address:	Pear Tree Mead Harlow Essex
Postcode:	CM18 7BY
Telephone number:	01279 836181
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	David Barton
Date of previous inspection:	29 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves a well-established but under-privileged neighbourhood in Harlow New Town; most families are the third or later generation of those re-housed from London in the nineteen-fifties. The great majority of pupils are of white-British extraction and attainment on entry is a little below what is expected for their age.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is close to the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. As well as a range of learning difficulties, the special educational needs in the school include social, emotional, behavioural, speech and communication and physical needs.

The school gained School Achievement Awards in 2002 and 2003. It achieved Investors in People status in 2002 and was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003. The school is an active participant in Excellence in Cities and in the Leadership Development Strategy.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19623	Michael Cahill	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music English as an additional language
9275	Candy Kalms	Lay inspector	
29426	David Grimwood	Team inspector	English Geography History Physical education Special educational needs
29365	Ann Johnston	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Religious education Foundation Stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school achieves a **satisfactory degree of effectiveness** and provides **satisfactory value for money**. Good leadership and management by the headteacher are sharply focused on raising standards by improving the quality of the education. National test results at the end of Year 6 have risen since the last inspection, while results for Year 2 have fallen in the same period. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, as is the level of pupils' achievements. Weaknesses in the management structure contribute to inconsistencies in the work of the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their full-time education; they begin to develop basic skills and good attitudes to learning.
- The new headteacher and the governing body provide strong leadership that is clearly focused on raising standards.
- Good links with parents, the community and other schools enhance pupils' learning.
- Booster classes have contributed to improving national test results at the end of Year 6, while results at the end of Year 2 have been too low for a number of years because of staffing and management problems.
- Pupils acquire information and communication technology skills well but there are too few opportunities for these skills to be used to help learning in other subjects.
- Monitoring has been ineffective in promoting consistency in important aspects of the school's work, in particular lesson planning and assessment.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, for example in improving the planning of the curriculum and the information and communication technology resources. However, there is more to do here and in improving assessment and its use in Years 1 to 6.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: 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.*

The trend in the school's national test results at the end of Year 2 over the last five years has been downwards in reading, writing and mathematics, unlike the national trend. This is largely due to frequent staff absences and to a relative neglect of this part of the school by members of the senior management team. Improvements in test results at the end of Year 6 are better than the national trend. However, the targets agreed with the local education authority for mathematics or English were not met in 2003. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the present Year 2, while still below what they should be, have improved as a result of consistently better teaching. Those in Year 6 continue to be below average.

Pupils' overall achievement is **satisfactory**. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage, achieving good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. In recent years this has not been maintained in Years 1 and 2, and achievement has been below what it should have been. This situation is being successfully tackled, although long-term staff absences present particular problems. Pupils achieve satisfactorily during Years 3 to 6 with many making more than the expected progress in terms of National Curriculum levels. The school gained Achievement Awards in 2002 and 2003 in recognition of improvements in its Year 6 test results.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are promoted satisfactorily. Most pupils are willing and eager to take responsibility and show good interest in school life and the range of activities provided. Provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory because there are very few opportunities for learning about their own and other cultures. Pupils' behaviour and relationships with each other and with adults are largely satisfactory as are their attendance and punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory quality of education**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved since the last inspection. An important strength of the teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is that it is clearly focused on the early learning goals and teachers' planning makes good use of the regular assessments that are made of pupils' learning. A weakness of several lessons in the rest of the school is that teachers do not make clear what it is that pupils are expected to learn and then assess whether this has been achieved. Furthermore, assessment information is not used to set pupils' targets for the improvement of their work. Where teaching is good in these lessons it is usually planned so that work is set at different levels of difficulty and pupils then acquire basic skills well.

Curriculum planning and organisation are satisfactory, with good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and for pupils with special educational needs. There are few planned links between subjects, although a recent literacy-based initiative is promoting good learning. There are good opportunities for taking part in sport, but very few educational visits. The school maintains a satisfactory level of care for its pupils; staffing difficulties have meant that some pupils are not known well by their teachers. The new headteacher and the governing body are actively seeking to resolve these problems. A strength of the school, and one that is important in its further improvement, is that it maintains a good working partnership with parents, the community and other local schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school and is building staff morale in order to take forward the priorities clearly identified in the improvement plan. However, aspects of the school's self-evaluation are not sharply focused because the senior management team as a whole is not making a coherent contribution to whole-school development. The governing body offers strong support to the school and is determined to judge its performance in relation to the targets in the improvement plan; it is doing all that it can to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold positive views of the school; they feel welcome in it and value the fact that their children are treated fairly and expected to work hard. They appreciate the good arrangements for helping their children to settle in to the school and that children like coming to school. Pupils welcome the recently introduced opportunities for them to voice their opinions, such as through the school council and family groups; they feel that their views are being listened to increasingly.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- set clear objectives for what pupils are to learn in each lesson;
- develop secure assessment procedures related to National Curriculum levels and use the information obtained to set individual and group targets;
- use information and communication technology to support and extend learning across the curriculum;
- monitor regularly how well teachers implement whole school policies and taking appropriate action where necessary.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, making good gains in all six areas of learning. Most of the current Reception children are on track to attain the national goals for early learning by the time that they enter Year 1. Many pupils in Year 2 have had an unsettled experience in earlier years and have not achieved to capacity; their overall standards are below average. Standards in Year 6 are below average, although most pupils demonstrate satisfactory achievement during the junior years as a whole. Although there are variations from year to year there are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils within particular year groups. However, the school is rightly monitoring the performance of the more able boys because last year's results did show a difference, although not statistically significant.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results at the end of Year 2 are lower than they were at the time of the last inspection; in 2003 they were well below the national average.
- Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, making good gains in their learning; achievement in Years 1 to 6 has been variable but is now satisfactory overall.
- Pupils are competent users of information and communication technology.
- Pupils achieve good standards in swimming.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.4 (13.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.6 (11.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	13.8 (13.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 40 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (24.9)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.9 (26.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.8 (27.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The trend over the last five years in the tests taken at the end of Year 2 has been one of overall deterioration in reading, mathematics and writing. Results are much lower than they were at the time of the last inspection, although the 2003 results represent a slight improvement compared with those of 2002. Until the start of the current school year, there has been too little effective intervention directed at dealing with the staffing problems affecting pupils in Years 1 and 2 and so pupils' achievement in those years has not been as good as it should have been. The school has focused on improving its results at the end of Year 6 and has been successful in this; although remaining below average, overall, results have improved more than the national averages and the school gained an Achievement Award. Over the past few years,

results in each of English, mathematics and science have improved by about the same amount. Last year, partly because all pupils were taught science by the specialist coordinator, results improved to the national average. The targets agreed with the local education authority for 2003 were unrealistic and the school fell a long way short of meeting them. Targets for 2004, based on more accurate assessment information, are more realistic, particularly given the year group's poor showing in national tests in Year 2. Nevertheless, inspection evidence indicates that their achievement over their junior years is satisfactory. During the inspection it was clear that the headteacher's focus on improving achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning were having a positive impact throughout the school, notably for Year 2 pupils. Pupils' overall achievement from what, for many, were low starting points is now satisfactory.

2. The current attainment on entry to the school is slightly below the national average, although there are considerable variations within and between year groups. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of good assessment of their learning needs followed by well targeted support from teaching assistants who are well-trained and thoroughly prepared. There was insufficient evidence on which to base judgements on the performance of pupils identified as gifted or talented.
3. There was not enough evidence on which to base secure judgements of standards and achievement in several subjects, either because too few lessons were observed during the inspection period, or because insufficient examples of previous work have been kept. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved over the past few years and children are now achieving well. Over the same period provision in Years 1 and 2 has been very uneven because of staffing difficulties and many pupils now in the junior years did not achieve as well as they should have by the end of Year 2. Results of national tests fell to a level below what they were at the time of the last inspection. Inspection evidence indicates that new and stronger leadership and management have led to better teaching and organization and have already produced improvement. Pupils in Year 2 are on track to achieve better test results this year compared to previous years in reading, writing and mathematics, though they are likely to remain below average. Standards in Year 2 are well below expectations in science because very few pupils are attaining highly. In information and communication technology, pupils' attainment is in average with examples of work that are above average for their age; this represents very good improvement since the last inspection.
4. Pupils now in Year 6 did not have the benefit of the improved provision in the Foundation Stage and national test data shows that their results at the end of Year 2 were very low, in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. The school's data shows that most pupils have made at least satisfactory progress from their attainment at the end of Year 2; a significant proportion of the last Year 6 exceeded this, though standards overall are below average. Nevertheless, the achievement of most of these pupils over their junior years will have been satisfactory. Year 6 pupils are mostly competent users of information and communication technology.. Almost all pupils achieve the national expectation of swimming 25 metres unaided, and pupils also achieve a good level of success in team sports.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are variable, but satisfactory overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory but pupils have few experiences to enhance their cultural development, and this aspect is unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils display good attitudes and behaviour; they are usually interested in their lessons and want to learn.
- Pupils work together well and the school is a harmonious community.
- There is insufficient focus on the promotion of the pupils' cultural development.

Commentary

5. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons are satisfactory and often good. However, there are occasions when a small but significant number of pupils demonstrate both unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour; this has an adverse effect on their achievement.
6. Children in the Nursery have settled well into school routines and are developing good working habits because of the good support they receive. They behave well and learn to play and work together, becoming more confident. A small number of children in the Reception classes find it difficult to continue the good work habits they acquired in the Nursery although most are on course to achieve the early learning goals in this aspect of their development.
7. The majority of pupils enjoy school and want to learn. In many lessons they are well motivated and interested in their work. They listen attentively to their teachers and respond well when the lesson is interesting and the teaching good. In contrast, a small but significant minority of pupils throughout the school do not always comply with the usual classroom expectations, especially when lessons are less interesting.
8. The school has a number of pupils who sometimes display challenging behaviour. The headteacher is working hard to ensure that all the pupils know the high standards of behaviour expected of them. Some pupils have experienced a large number of staff changes and this has affected the consistency of classroom management. In discussions with inspectors, a few pupils said that they were unhappy with behaviour as it disturbs lessons and that there is some bullying and harassment. However, many were confident that the headteacher deals effectively with any issues brought to her attention.
9. Moral development is satisfactory; the school teaches the differences between right and wrong and most pupils apply what they have learnt to their own behaviour. Moral issues are shared in assemblies, such as when a presentation in a class assembly on the value of water was performed by younger pupils.
10. Pupils' social development is satisfactory because the school encourages good relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults and care is taken to ensure that all pupils are fully integrated into the school community. As a result the school is a harmonious community; pupils of all backgrounds work and play together. Because teachers encourage pupils to work together in pairs and to share ideas, they frequently cooperate and collaborate well. The wide variety of after-school activities help pupils relate to each other. Pupils become more responsible and mature as they move through the school and undertake various duties. They act as monitors for classroom duties and, as they grow older, they help at lunchtime those who are younger with activities in the playground, and set up the hall for school assemblies. The school council and 'family groups' offer pupils a structure through which they can share ideas and become involved in decision-making.
11. Pupils' spiritual development has remained satisfactory since the last inspection. It is mainly promoted through assemblies that are predominantly Christian and give pupils time to reflect. However, there are missed opportunities for promoting the spiritual dimension through art, music, science and literature, because these are not well enough planned for.
12. Pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. In assemblies and lessons, pupils have few experiences to develop awareness of their own and the other cultures represented in modern society. The contributions of both art and music are limited and apart from a display of aboriginal art, there is little around the school to reflect other faiths or cultures, particularly the multi-ethnic nature of modern British society.
13. Attendance in the school is satisfactory and contributes to the learning that takes place. However, current figures show a decline from the good levels previously reported. There is

little unauthorised absence. The school has satisfactory systems to monitor absences and follow up unexplained absence; parents are routinely contacted on the first day of absence. Pupils with poor or irregular attendance and punctuality are identified but the procedures for improving the situation are not well developed.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.1
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for all its pupils. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The recording and use of assessments, other than in the Foundation Stage, are unsatisfactory. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills, but much of the curriculum is fragmented and there is some inconsistency in provision between parallel classes. The school is not fully following the revised locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils benefit from a satisfactory level of support, care and guidance and from the school’s good links with parents, the local community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are examples of imaginative teaching that stimulates pupils’ interest and promotes good learning and achievement.
- Good practice in identifying clearly what pupils are to learn in a lesson is far from consistent across the school and the overall making and use of assessment is unsatisfactory.
- At best, teachers manage pupils’ behaviour well by setting them interesting tasks that extend their learning; on other occasions teachers do not succeed in involving pupils fully in lessons.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs and those needing extra work in literacy.
- There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to acquire and use literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2 (5%)	19 (50%)	16 (42%)	1 (3%)	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.

14. Teaching in the Nursery was consistently good during the inspection; that in the Foundation Stage as a whole was satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2, nearly two-thirds of teaching was good while about half of that in Years 3 to 6 was of that quality. The overall teaching of English, including literacy, and of mathematics, including numeracy, is satisfactory. There are some

good examples of information and communication technology links with other subjects, including literacy and numeracy, but these are not consistently planned across the school and too few in number. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum, but few planned for reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of other subjects is satisfactory overall, with some that is very good and a small amount that is unsatisfactory. The better teaching seen is promoting good learning and achievement and contributing to raising standards.

15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils who need help are identified in good time. A suitable programme of learning is planned and work is well matched to the pupils' needs. Pupils' learning is assisted by individual help from well-briefed teaching assistants, who are active in making sure that pupils sustain concentration and are included throughout the lesson.
16. There is great inconsistency of practice across the school in terms of sharing clear learning objectives for pupils, assessing their progress towards them and providing feedback. This is largely because there has not been effective monitoring in recent years of the implementation of whole-school policies. This is being urgently addressed since the appointment of the new headteacher. At best, teachers use imaginative and innovative methods to capture pupils' interest and motivate them to meet high expectations. Drama has a key role in this and the current project that links literacy and the arts was used to good effect when pupils in Years 3 and 4 created pieces of drama that aided their understanding of a story.
17. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance of teacher-directed and self-choice activities; this helps pupils to develop independent learning skills. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 now benefit from teaching that recognises their need for practical work as an aid to language development and to deepening understanding. For example, pupils in the mixed-age class made very good gains in their learning in a very good design and technology lesson. They improved their design and making skills very well when working independently on the task of constructing a house for a little person. There was a real buzz of interest and commitment in the classroom and pupils enthusiastically described in detail for whom they were making the house, how they had planned it and overcome difficulties. The lesson made a very good contribution to developing literacy skills as well as those of design and technology. Pupils in the Year 2 class benefited from the good links made between literacy and science when they used the Internet for carefully guided research purposes.
18. There were good examples of work being set that was designed to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities in the mixed-age classes. In the classes for pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, careful planning ensured that pupils were given appropriate musical instruments and a range of suitable history reference books according to their ability. In a mathematics lesson, pupils of all abilities achieved well because they were given manageable numbers to test for divisibility. Learning was not as good for pupils in Years 3 and 4 when too little time was allocated to their music lesson or when too long was spent on one part of a mathematics lesson. The school recognises the need to review its timetable structure with respect to the number and length of lessons each day so that pupils have long enough to develop fully their knowledge, skills and understanding.
19. There are good examples of teachers framing the learning objectives in pupil-friendly language, for example to understand that some materials can be altered by squashing, twisting or bending. These clear explanations of objectives help pupils to know what they are going to learn, facilitate assessment during the lesson, and allow them to evaluate their success at the end. Such assessment is on-going in the Foundation Stage and is used well to plan the next stage of learning. There is a much patchier picture in some classes. Potentially good assessment questions do not always provide the teacher with the information needed because no attempt is made, for example by using whiteboards or number fans, to find out what all of the pupils know. Assessment information is used well in some classes to involve pupils in setting their own targets, which they then have on their tables or in their books. The potential

for raising standards further through the consistent implementation of the good practice in parts of the school is fully recognised by the headteacher.

20. Pupils respond well, for the most part, to the challenge provided by interesting and challenging work when they know what they are intended to learn and what is expected of them. Their behaviour is generally at least satisfactory and often good, particularly when given the opportunity to work in groups; they are developing good skills in this respect. Their capacity for concentration depends very much on what it is they are doing; there were good examples of sustained involvement in design and technology, science, history and religious education lessons where the work was, at least in part, of a practical problem-solving nature. On the other hand, when lessons are less interesting some pupils are less attentive, restless and do not concentrate on their work.
21. Work is regularly marked and there are good examples of marking that makes clear to pupils what is good about their work and what they need to do to improve. However, there is too much inconsistency in marking and in the expectations relating to the quality of presentation. Similarly, the potential of homework for supporting learning and involving parents is not being consistently realised.

Example of outstanding practice

There are examples of imaginative teaching, often using drama, which stimulates pupils' interest and promotes very good learning and achievement.

Pupils in one of the classes in Years 3 and 4 watched and listened with rapt attention as their teacher, in role as an archaeologist, returned from Ancient Egypt, set the scene and enlisted their help with his dig. The lesson had been very well prepared and resourced and pupils were enthralled and excited by the archaeologist's 'discovery' of a pair of scissors that had been buried in one of the sand trays. Pupils then worked together very well in groups, carefully excavating their trays, recording the exact position of anything that they found on a coordinate grid and writing up their 'dig notes'. The class was regularly re-focused and pupils from the different 'sites' reported their findings; the intention was that they should deduce a common thread or story. Pupils were totally absorbed in the task, animatedly discussing what they were finding; all were fully included and involved. The lesson was very effective in promoting high quality learning and achievement in terms of historical investigation, emphasising care, and attention to detail, careful recording and making tentative guesses at the significance of finds.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Accommodation is generally good and supports learning both inside and outside the school.
- There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education
- The revised agreed syllabus for religious education has not been fully implemented.
- An interesting innovation linking literacy to music, art, dance and drama is enhancing learning for some pupils.
- Few visits are organised and this reduces opportunities for pupils to learn about the variety of life in multi-ethnic Britain.

Commentary

22. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. However, the newly revised locally agreed syllabus for religious education has not been fully implemented across the school and, as a result, coverage does not ensure progression in pupils' learning. The school goes well beyond meeting statutory requirements for physical education and provides

pupils with a very broad curriculum including orienteering in the school grounds, swimming in the school's own pool with a qualified instructor and a range of out-of-school clubs to enrich learning in a variety of sports. Plans to revise the curriculum map to ensure that the principles of the National Primary Strategy, which states that children should achieve excellence through enjoyable, interactive experiences, are outlined in the school improvement plan. Where this has been put in place, through an innovative scheme which makes explicit links with English, music, art, dance and drama, the pupils in Years 3 and 4 have shown much greater enthusiasm for reading and writing and this is beginning to raise standards.

23. Coverage of the curriculum is planned for two-yearly cycles so that pupils in mixed-age classes do not repeat work. There is good provision for individuals, including booster groups and withdrawal groups for pupils with particular needs, including those with special educational needs and those who have fallen behind in English and mathematics. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are detailed and thorough and contain clear and achievable targets for learning. Teachers and class assistants work well together to meet pupils' needs. The expertise of outside agencies is called upon when necessary. There is a newly created register for gifted and talented pupils; however, implementation of work with learning mentors for them is at an early stage of development.
24. Support for learning outside the school day is satisfactory. There is a wide range of clubs, some of which are run by teaching assistants and midday supervisors such as basketball and rugby. Others focus on speaking French and playing chess. Good links have been made with other educational establishments, and these help prepare pupils for the next stage of school life. The Nursery and Reception classes have good systems for induction¹ and this ensures a smooth start to the children's education. There are too few visits made and visitors invited into school to enhance the curriculum, and this restricts learning opportunities for pupils, especially with respect to life in multi-ethnic Britain.
25. The accommodation is good and offers great potential. The school has two separate buildings with two halls and an information and communication technology suite and extensive grounds. Extra funding has recently been obtained and will be used to improve the accommodation, both indoors and out, for children in the Foundation Stage. This will enable children in the Reception year to have linked classrooms and ensure greater equality of opportunity. The newly refurbished library provides good support for learning and is sufficiently spacious to accommodate a whole class. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. The majority of the members of staff have satisfactory knowledge and experience so that all areas of the curriculum can be covered securely. The school has experienced a number of long-term and intermittent staff absences, which have been detrimental to establishing and maintaining consistent approaches and on standards of attainment. There are insufficient quality resources to support learning in some subjects. A start has been made on organising the literacy and history resources. Artefacts for religious education are very limited; science resources are difficult to access and are not sufficient to support all the programmes of study.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, the care, support and guidance offered to pupils are satisfactory and in most respects the school ensures that pupils work in a safe and healthy environment. Arrangements to involve the pupils in the school's work and its development are satisfactory.

¹ Induction refers the arrangements to receive pupils new to the school and to help them settle into the routines and make friends.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of learning mentors is a positive initiative to help support identified pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Although overall arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, some new or temporary teachers have not had recent training.
- The site and premises are regularly checked for safety but the school does not have a trips and visits policy and risk assessments have not been carried out before most visits.

Commentary

26. The school has maintained a satisfactory level of care for its pupils, which contributes positively to their learning. The headteacher is working hard to meet the wide variety of pupils' personal and educational needs, but the unsettled staffing and high number of temporary staff have affected the level of care and support offered.
27. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. The school follows local guidelines and the headteacher as designated member has recently updated her training. Staff training is planned but there is not a regular pattern of training to ensure that members of staff, especially new and temporary staff, are clear about what to do in the event of any concerns. Appropriate care is available for pupils who are looked after by the local authority. Regular checks of the site and premises take place. Systems have recently been put in place to document any issues and action taken, although the policy has not been recently reviewed. Day-to-day first aid and care for pupils who are unwell are satisfactory. There is a high number of staff trained in first aid, but not all medical care is dealt with by them and not all minor injuries are recorded. The school recognises the need to extend its health and safety procedures to include trips and visits. The school successfully ensures that pupils have access to the full range of activities in spite of physical and other disabilities.
28. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Good arrangements give a smooth introduction to children about to enter the Nursery. Pupils' achievements are recognised and rewarded in assemblies each week. In classes where staffing is settled, teachers know the pupils well. They understand their individual needs and difficulties and use their knowledge to monitor informally their personal development. In classes where there has been much staff absence and a high turnover of temporary staff, teachers do not have the same depth of understanding about pupils. In these classes, in particular, teaching assistants have an essential role in helping to meet the pupils' needs. The recent introduction of learning mentors is a positive initiative aimed at giving valuable support to pupils in Years 5 and 6 who have been identified as needing help. Some pupils do not feel they have access to adults who will listen to them about any concerns they may have.
29. Pupils' involvement in the school's work and development is satisfactory. The school council and the recently introduced 'family groups' allow pupils the opportunity to put forward their ideas on how to improve the school facilities. They have contributed towards the school development plan. They have been involved in interviewing applicants for the post of headteacher and have attended meetings of the governing body. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work or evaluate their achievement and no consistently applied system that allows pupils to discuss or set their own targets.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The good links with parents, other schools and the community contribute positively to pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with local businesses and secondary schools extend the range of opportunities open to pupils.
- A supportive Parents' Association contributes well to school improvement.

Commentary

30. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting together with those who responded to the questionnaire were generally supportive of the school and what it offers their children. However, some did express concern that their children had been adversely affected by the unsettled staffing.
31. The school has maintained good links with its parents and works hard to make them feel welcome and to support their children's learning. A small number of committed parents help in lessons and around the school. Some have recently worked on a joint project with pupils to refurbish the library, others run the football team and one is currently improving the pond area. They willingly accompany visits, as seen during the inspection when several accompanied Year 6 pupils to the 'Delights of Science' workshop. A supportive Parents' Association has raised considerable funds that have helped to improve the school environment. A Family Learning Programme helps parents of younger children to support their learning at home. Parents have recently been consulted on how to improve the school.
32. The information provided for parents about the school and their children's progress is good. A newsletter each month informs parents about forthcoming events and school matters and gives parents the opportunity to comment about the school. Frequent letters advise parents about additional matters, particularly staff changes. A basic prospectus provides information on school routines and there is a well-presented governors' annual report. Some parents were not entirely happy with the amount of information about how to support learning at home and homework. Inspection evidence found that the school provides information each term about work being done in lessons and has recently sent home a leaflet about how to help with handwriting. However, curriculum workshops are not a regular occurrence. A small number of parents in their questionnaire responses felt that they were not well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors found that the information parents receive is similar to that offered in many schools. Parents are invited to discuss their children's progress at a consultation meeting each term. Annual written reports are good; they are detailed and include information on strengths or weaknesses but do not include targets for future development.
33. The school has maintained positive links with the community. This makes a valuable contribution to the curriculum and enriches pupils' learning. There are links with some local businesses, particularly through the Essex Education and Business Partnership. Science learning for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 is helped through the 'Delights in Science' and 'Diddy Delights' workshops held in conjunction with local businesses. The school is used by community groups and outside organisations, generating additional income for the school.
34. Links with other schools and partner institutions are good and help learning. Good sporting links with a local high school have resulted in their teachers contributing to the physical education programme. The school works closely with the local secondary school to help pupils in Year 6 make a smooth transfer. The Harlow Excellence Cluster, in conjunction with the local secondary school, has funded the learning mentor scheme that is aimed at helping pupils with barriers to learning before they start at secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and governing body is good. Other members of staff provide satisfactory leadership. However, the management structure is unsatisfactory as it is not developed sufficiently to have a significant impact upon pupils' achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of the way she wants the school to develop.
- The governors have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide strong support that is focused on improvement.
- Financial planning and management are good.
- Assessments have not led to clear targets for improvement for all groups of pupils.
- The management of the curriculum is not secure enough to ensure that pupils build progressively on their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move up the school.
- The inconsistent make-up of the teaching staff is a hindrance to pupils' achievement.

Commentary

35. The headteacher has vigorously set about making her vision a reality. In a comparatively short time, she has started to create a positive climate for learning and is motivating the teaching staff by building their morale. The school development plan is a thorough, detailed document, drawn up after consultation with staff, governors and pupils. The priorities in the plan are appropriate and define the way forward for the school; they are a good framework for financial decision-making. The process of team building is under way, helped by the regular meetings of groups of teachers responsible for teaching pupils in different sections of the school. At the moment, these meetings tend to concentrate exclusively on what the pupils have learnt, or found difficulty with, rather than on using this information to improve focus and consistency in future teaching and learning. The headteacher's vision and determination are shared by a number of the teaching staff, although not many of the subject coordinators have a sufficiently developed understanding of the learning of pupils throughout the school to be in a position to have a positive influence on standards.
36. The management of the school is not secure; the composition and structure of a senior management team that will provide coherent and consistent direction have not been finalised. This means that the school's process of self-evaluation lacks sharp focus, which in turn means that support from outside agencies, including the local education authority, is fragmented and has not been fully effective in bringing about improvements. The staff performance management² arrangements have been revised recently, but the new system has not been operating long enough to have had a full impact on professional development. There is a determination amongst most staff to develop and share a curriculum that has unique significance to the school. However, the management of the curriculum is not sufficiently secure to ensure the systematic development of pupils' skills and learning throughout the school, a process made more important and at the same time more difficult because of the mixed-age groups in most classes. Subject coordinators, generally, do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of a curriculum structure in their subject that is necessary to assist the achievement of all groups of pupils throughout the school.
37. The headteacher has been instrumental in instigating clear procedures for assessing the levels of learning of the pupils. An immediate effect of this has been the more realistic targets set for pupils' standards at Year 2 and Year 6. Assessments have not yet been used to set clear targets for improvement for all groups of pupils and targets have not been sufficiently linked to levels of learning identified in the National Curriculum. An exception to this is pupils

² Performance management refers to the arrangements for evaluating and supporting the professional development of members of staff.

with special educational needs. Here, the coordinator has worked with other teachers to set clear targets for pupils in their individual education plans. As a consequence of this, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous levels of learning. Arrangements for the induction of staff are not fully developed and there is insufficient assistance to help temporary teachers be fully effective, particularly when they are completely new to the school. The retention of staff and dealing with long-term absence are problems for the school; the lack of a consistent complement of teachers is a barrier to the good achievement of pupils.

38. The governance of the school is good. Led by an experienced and informed chair, the governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and, for the most part, understand the reasons for the weaknesses. They are prepared to initiate actions, the appointment of the present headteacher being an example. They offer strong support for the headteacher and senior staff but, at the same time, are determined to judge performance with a set of detailed targets allied to the school's development plan. They are prepared to share and support any tough decisions that may have to be taken in the near future. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties; including oversight of the school's promotion of racial equality. The governors are generally shrewd in their desire to get best value, a recent example being their decisions about refurbishment of the school's swimming pool. The school's financial officer has a close control over financial matters, which are efficiently organised; the school is quick to respond to any recommendations made by auditors. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	830,588
Total expenditure	856,253
Expenditure per pupil	2,619

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	55,313
Balance carried forward to the next	29,648

Much of the balance is being used to pay supply teachers to cover long-term staff absences.

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 **good**.

Commentary

39. Children attend the Nursery part time and transfer to full-time attendance in the Reception class in September and January. The attainment of children on entry to the Nursery is just below average. Most children are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year. In 2003, children scored above the county average on the end of stage assessments. Children achieve well overall because teaching is consistently good in the Nursery and the clearly understood systems for planning and assessment support all staff, especially those new to the Reception year, in ensuring that children make good progress.
40. The planning of lessons is thorough and closely linked to the national goals for early learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the curriculum in the Reception classes was over directed and there were few opportunities for child-initiated activities and imaginative play. Those children with particular needs or difficulties are included well and there are support plans for children identified with behaviour difficulties. Members of the support staff are skilled and their careful interventions help children to learn and reinforce the teachers' work. The coordinator has established a much sharper focus on teaching and assessing the Foundation Stage curriculum to meet the needs of young children. The fact that this vision is clear and implemented consistently across all classes enables the children to achieve well.
41. The Nursery has spacious accommodation and a wide range of resources to support all the areas of learning. The new early years class, by contrast, has much fewer resources and is not as supportive an environment for learning as the parallel Reception class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very responsive to children's needs and create a rich learning environment for them in the Nursery.

Commentary

42. The personal, social and emotional development of the children is carefully planned. There is a strong induction process in the Nursery, which ensures that children, even those who are only just three years old, settle quickly and learn the routines. Children achieve well as a result of good teaching. They are on course to attain the early learning goals in this area by the time they enter Year 1.
43. Adults provide good role models for children, giving them plenty of praise. This builds strong, caring relationships, and children are happy and secure. Teaching is generally good. Good use is made of positive behaviour comments such as "remember to do the right thing" which enables children to take responsibility for their own actions. They take turns in play and begin to negotiate with one another. Staff record careful observations of children's progress on notes so that they can plan accurately to meet future needs.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and focuses on promoting and developing spoken language.
- A structured programme in the Reception classes supports early reading and writing skills.

Commentary

44. Most children are on course to meet the expectations in this area of learning by the end of the Reception year. They achieve well because teaching is good and there is a structured programme to develop the core skills of reading and writing.
45. In the Nursery, where many children are at the early stages of developing language; all adults are continually improving their communication skills. They spend time interacting with the children, extending their play by using a range of questions and using every opportunity to encourage the children to speak.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical thinking and basic number skills are planned into a wide range of activities.
- High expectations and thorough assessments result in much work being matched to children's needs.

Commentary

46. Most children are on target to meet the national goals for learning by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is satisfactory with good features. In one Reception class session, the teacher set up problem solving using toys; good use was made of questioning to extend children's mathematical thinking and some were able confidently to add, subtract and record calculations using numbers up to 10. Others were working with the teaching assistant, making and counting gingerbread men in the role-play area. It is clear they achieve well because of the quality of adult support and the good use made of assessments begun in the Nursery.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's information and communication technology skills are well developed.
- Activities emphasise speaking and listening, which benefits the children with the development of their vocabulary.

Commentary

47. Children are set to meet the national expectations by the end of the Reception year; their achievement is good in response to good teaching and organisation. In a Reception lesson in the information and communication technology suite, the youngest children were able to use a painting program to draw, decorate and print a rainbow fish. Members of staff in the Nursery

ensure that children's vocabulary is extended during activities. Children's cultural awareness is raised through celebrating topical festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. The provision has improved since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a variety of challenging and interesting activities.
- Reception children have access to the outdoor play area and indoor hall.

Commentary

48. Most children are likely to meet the national goals for learning by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is good in the Nursery and satisfactory in Reception. Children achieve well because they have many opportunities to develop their manipulative skills through cutting, sticking and constructing. Most Reception children hold a pencil correctly in order to write their names and confidently use the mouse to control information and communication technology programmes.
49. In physical education, Reception children move in a mainly coordinated manner on the outdoor equipment and respond well to the teacher's imaginative ideas. The new funding will provide a covered area outdoors as currently there is no protection so children are unable to use it when the weather is bad and equipment can get damaged in the rain.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

50. This area of learning was not a main focus of the inspection. The planning identifies a number of stimulating activities linked to the themes of wood and the Rainbow Fish. Some examples of imaginative work were seen in the Nursery, such as the construction of wooden sculptures and children independently choosing from a range of materials to make a collage picture.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective action to arrest the five years of declining national test results, especially in writing, at the end of Year 2 has only recently been taken; booster classes have contributed effectively to improving results at the end of Year 6.
- Improved assessment procedures are having a positive effect on target setting.
- Innovative curriculum development and teaching are promoting good learning in some junior classes.
- Standards in reading and writing are below average.

Commentary

51. Standards in reading and writing of Year 2 pupils are below average; this is partly because too few pupils are working at the higher levels. The reasons for this include a history of unsettled staffing, teachers not having had sufficiently high expectations of their pupils or being insecure in their knowledge of the different levels of learning in the National Curriculum. In the past, there has not been effective intervention to correct this by members of the senior management team, including the subject coordinator, and national test results have fallen. Where there has been focused intervention, test results at the end of Year 6 have improved. Present standards in Year 6 are below average; this judgement is supported by the modest targets set for these pupils. These targets are, nevertheless, much more realistic than those set in previous years and are a direct result of better assessment procedures. At the time of the last inspection, overall standards were judged to be in line with national expectations, and it was reported that national test results were improving.
52. The pupils now in Year 6 recorded very poor results in their national tests at the end of Year 2. The school's data shows that since then most pupils have made at least satisfactory progress and a significant proportion have exceeded this. Although present standards are still below average, overall achievement has been satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs generally receive good support from well briefed teaching assistants and make good progress in relation to their previous levels of learning. Teaching assistants play a full part in the teaching of English and, as well as assisting individual and small groups of pupils in lessons, they run sessions for groups of pupils withdrawn from lessons. These sessions offer pupils good levels of individual help and generally boost their achievement. They are usually timed to take place during the independent work sessions of lessons, but this is not always possible and can result in the organisation of lessons becoming difficult. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls.
53. Standards in reading and writing have fallen since the last inspection when they were judged to be average. The quality of handwriting and presentation generally, areas criticised in the last inspection, have not improved significantly. The school has adopted a commercial scheme for handwriting, but this is not applied sufficiently systematically with the result that many pupils in Year 6 still do not employ a joined script. Teachers' levels of expectation of presentation are not high enough and occasionally they offer poor examples in the work they present to pupils. The standards in reading also suffer because of an insufficiently structured and organised approach, particularly for the older pupils. This results in pupils sometimes having unsuitable reading material. An example of the unstructured approach is found in the library, an attractive room, if something of a thoroughfare, with an adequate supply of books, but where the fiction section is not graded for suitability for different ages and abilities of pupils.

54. The pupils are offered many good and varied opportunities for speaking and listening with the result that, by the time they are in Year 6, pupils reach standards close to average. Discussion forms a part of most lessons and some literacy lessons offer exciting and innovative opportunities for speaking and listening. In a good lesson in Years 3 and 4, groups of pupils improvised a scene from a story they had been studying. Higher-attaining pupils did this particularly well, refining and improving their performance after evaluation from the teacher. In a class of pupils in Years 5 and 6, a pupil took on the role of Snow White and faced a series of questions from the other pupils. Scenarios around the school, like a simulated travel agency, give pupils good opportunities to develop their speaking and thinking through role-play.
55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils' learning is helped when there is good planning, involving activities for pupils of different abilities. In a good lesson for Year 6 pupils, the teacher planned three sets of questions at different levels, ranging from literal understanding to inference, to challenge pupils' understanding of the poem they had been studying. Where there is insecure classroom management, teachers are sometimes unable to focus on the group of pupils they are directly teaching or on answers that pupils give to questions. Insufficient preparation and organisation also result in a drop in the pace of lessons and time for learning not being maximised.
56. Assessment arrangements have been improved recently and it is now possible to track the progress of individual and groups of pupils. The coordinator has analysed pupils' responses to assessment material to find areas of weakness in learning, but this information has not been used fully to develop learning targets for groups or individuals. Teachers set learning objectives for lessons and generally mark pupils' work quite well, offering encouragement and sometimes advice on how pupils might improve their work. There are relatively few examples of teachers referring to how well pupils have achieved the learning objectives or of using information found from marking to set pupils further targets for learning.
57. Teachers are beginning to make good use of the literacy hour to support learning in other areas of the curriculum. Year 2 pupils, for example, learned about the life cycle of the frog, as they used notes they had made to produce a flow chart. The process is being extended through an evaluation, led by the coordinator, by teachers and pupils in Years 3 and 4, of a literacy programme designed to embrace art, music, dance and drama. This has led to some exciting lessons, stimulating good learning amongst the pupils. Pupils do have opportunities to draft their written work on computers, but such opportunities are relatively rare and the use of information and communication technology to support learning in English is an area for development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Sound opportunities are provided for pupils to apply and develop their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing in other subjects apart from English. Discussion is a feature of most lessons and pupils generally speak confidently and are appropriately articulate. Lessons in history are used very effectively to promote pupils' discussion and prediction skills. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 take some care framing questions around which they will base their research into life in Ancient Greek times. Pupils in Year 2 develop their writing skills by recording events leading to The Great Fire of London. The literacy scheme being used by pupils in Years 3 and 4 is deliberately designed to involve learning in music, art, dance and drama.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Booster classes have been effective in improving Year 6 national test results in recent years, although standards remain below average.
- National test results at the end of Year 2 have fallen over the last five years and no effective action had been taken to deal with this until this school year.
- A useful analysis of pupils' performance in tests in Years 3 to 6 has been carried out, but has not led to the required improvements in teaching, learning and standards because the information has not been used in a coordinated way.
- There is good practice, but too much inconsistency in communicating learning intentions and in using assessment to track progress and set targets.

Commentary

59. The decline since the last inspection in national test results at the end of Year 2 and the improvement in those at the end of Year 6 reflects the priorities of the school in recent years. There has been insufficient direction and support provided for teachers in Years 1 and 2, particularly in the context of long term staff absence. On the other hand, the provision of well-focused booster classes has clearly benefited older pupils and led to considerable improvement of national test results at the end of Year 6. In terms of their own attainment at the end of Year 2, the achievement of most pupils has been at least satisfactory, although not as good as that of pupils in other schools where attainment was similar. The coordinator has carried out a potentially useful analysis of pupils' performance in voluntary tests, but this has not been effectively used to improve planning and focus because not enough direction or guidance has been given to other teachers.
60. Work in the books of pupils in Year 2 shows good development of knowledge, skills and understanding in number, time, shape and measurement. There are good examples of pupils applying what they know to problem-solving in the context of money. Teaching is systematic and thorough, promoting good learning and achievement; marking is used well to promote further improvement. During the inspection pupils made good progress in their understanding of '1/2 of a number' and were helped considerably by the teacher's good planning and questioning and provision of good practical activities. Her presentation had a clear focus on sharing into two *equal* parts and on recording as *1/2 of 8 is 4*. Overall standards are below average because of the relatively small proportion of pupils operating at Level 3; nevertheless this represents an improvement on previous years. Pupils of all levels of ability are achieving well this year and satisfactorily in terms of their National Curriculum years to date.
61. Good features of some lessons for pupils in Years 3 and 4 included very good use of questions to revise and extend learning, for example in relation to drawing and interpreting pictograms and bar charts. A weakness in one lesson was poor time management that meant that too long was spent creating a tally chart and not enough time left for most pupils to draw the pictogram.
62. Examination of the work of pupils in Year 6 shows a strong emphasis on number and data handling with some good work on shape, including the angle properties of triangles. There are some good examples of the application of numerical skills, for example to working out the perimeters of compound shapes. Marking has been regular and focuses on presentation and the accuracy and correctness of work, thereby promoting improvement. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 displayed a very mixed knowledge of the properties of the rectangle, rhombus and trapezium in the mental starter part of the lesson. Higher-attaining pupils understood the term multiple and that 20 is a multiple of 2, 4 and 5. The learning objective *Recognising numbers that occur in more than one multiplication family* did not help pupils to be clear

enough about what they were going to learn and contributed to the fact that relatively few offered answers to questions. Because neither whiteboards nor number fans were used, this meant that there was insufficient motivation for many of the class to be fully involved. The quality of the number strips used to illustrate different times tables was poor and did nothing to stimulate interest; the opportunity for using information and communication technology resources to support learning was not taken. Nevertheless, most pupils worked well at the follow up tasks, set at three different levels of difficulty, and were supported well by the teacher and the teaching assistant. Good challenge was provided in the final session when pupils were invited to solve a problem that utilised what they had been learning. However, too many pupils did not contribute to this session, although one pupil recognised that the work on multiples related to earlier work on fractions; she and some other pupils correctly used the language of numerator and denominator. Overall, standards are below average and the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory; they have improved substantially on the very low results recorded at the end of Year 2.

63. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The better teaching is characterised by clear learning objectives, expressed in language that pupils can understand and by good use of whiteboards and practical apparatus to engage and maintain pupils' interest. Marking, as mentioned above, often makes a useful contribution to raising standards. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the support of the teaching assistants and often achieve better than their peers. There are good examples of assessment that is accurately linked to National Curriculum levels and sub-levels and which leads to achievable short-term improvement targets that are agreed between pupil and teacher. This is good practice but it is not consistently built on. In a similar way, some good practice in the use of information and communication technology to support and extend learning in mathematics has not been actively enough promoted and its use expected. Overall resources are inadequate and the coordinator recognises the need to remedy this and to improve storage and accessibility.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Although there are examples of pupils using their mathematical skills, particularly of data handling, in other subjects, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to apply the mathematics that they are learning in other situations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Focused teaching by the coordinator is promoting improvement in pupils' achievements at the end of Year 6, although the standards attained are below average.
- There is good practical and investigative work evident throughout the school.
- Current assessment procedures are not consistently applied and do not provide sufficient information to facilitate setting targets, tracking pupils' progress and planning for learning.

Commentary

65. The most recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that 80 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation level while only ten per cent exceeded it; overall, results were well below the national average. In contrast, test results at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were in line with the national average, and have shown steady improvement since the last inspection. Results at the end of Year 6 have risen mainly because the coordinator, who has very good subject knowledge, taught the majority of the pupils and ran master classes to prepare pupils for the changes to the tests and boost attainment in 2003. The present Year 6 contains a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and are on course to achieve results in national tests that are below average. Nevertheless, this represents satisfactory

achievement for most pupils in comparison to their poor assessment results at the end of Year 2.

66. Scrutiny of work shows that Year 2 pupils have recorded a limited amount of work and there is little evidence of high attainment. Pupils' work in two of the classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4 shows a good breadth of coverage and a significant amount of learning about investigative work. However, standards are still below average. In Years 5 and 6, there was evidence of different work being provided for the lower ability pupils but little evidence of high attainment. Standards are below average but the pupils have made satisfactory progress from Year 2 where results were well below average.
67. The quality of science teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. However, teachers are not consistently planning ahead and identifying resources, which results in some cases of aspects of learning not being covered. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 made satisfactory progress when they investigated foods eaten by different animals and collated the data into a simple table. In Years 5 and 6, pupils made good progress in an interactive and enjoyable lesson on the function of the heart. This activity was well designed to promote good progress in learning and the use of correct scientific terminology. When expectations are high and teaching methods are stimulating and collaborative, the pupils achieve well. Pupils' learning and achievement in Year 6 are positively aided by the coordinator's focused work with a range of booster groups. In one session, she worked through a range of questions, introducing and reinforcing new terminology and having high expectations that pupils would extend their learning and be able to identify variables in a fair test. Where there were obvious gaps in their knowledge she tracked back and helped them build on learning that was secure.
68. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory. The present coordinator has provided good leadership. Following the last inspection, she revised the policy and promoted a strong emphasis on developing an understanding of the scientific method through practical work throughout the school.
69. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Practical work has been introduced and standards have improved at Year 6. However, standards at the end of Year 2, although improving, remain a cause for concern.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are competent computer users.
- The coordinator provides very well informed leadership and support for other teachers.
- Some teachers do not make sufficient use of information and communication technology resources to enhance teaching and learning in other subjects.

Commentary

70. At the time of the last inspection, the skills of information and communication technology were not sufficiently taught and pupils' progress was unsatisfactory. There has been a very good level of improvement since that time in terms of resources, staff expertise and pupils' levels of competence. The remaining area for improvement is to make sure, through regular monitoring, that whole-school agreed policies for using information and communication technology to promote learning across the curriculum, are fully implemented. The coordinator recognises the need for teachers to familiarise themselves with new software and to evaluate its use with their classes in a systematic way. Her five-year plan for the development of information and communication technology is very well considered and designed to promote a greater degree of independent learning and research.

71. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrated good skills and confidence when connecting to the Internet in order to undertake research on the frog cycle to support work that they were doing in literacy. There was good recognition of pupils' differing learning needs in the planning of varied levels of expectation in terms of the use of keywords, search engines and web pages. Selection of an appropriate page enabled the teacher to focus the pupils' attention on elements of its design and use. The lesson succeeded well in enabling pupils to develop their Internet search skills; they reached a number of useful pages and recorded their findings on paper. The teacher then extended their learning further by showing them how to save a web page; the majority of pupils did this without further help. Through sensitive support by the teacher and the teaching assistant, all pupils were fully included in the lesson and achieved well; pupils demonstrated an above average level of competence for their age.
72. Examination of the previously completed work of pupils in Year 6 shows that they have become competent at word processing, using databases and spreadsheets, control and slide-show applications. They did not have the full benefit of improved facilities and staff expertise in their earlier years in the school, but their work indicates a satisfactory level of competence.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. There are some good examples of the planned use of information and communication technology to support and extend pupils' learning in other subject areas. For example, pupils in Year 1 successfully logged on and navigated to a program that provided practice in making up amounts of money from given coins. This was beneficial, but the software did not provide useful feedback or automatic extra challenge to pupils and required a level of competence in literacy that was too high. Planned and directed use is rare although there are examples throughout the school of word processing being used to aid development of writing skills. Too often research on the Internet results in pupils printing off documents that they do not fully understand, but have some relevance to the topic being studied. There is scope for extending the use of pupils' developing information and communication technology skills to a wider range of topics and contexts.

HUMANITIES

74. Two lessons were seen in **history** and one lesson was seen in **geography**. Although insufficient work of pupils in Years 2 and 6 was seen for secure judgements to be made on standards in history, indications are that there has been an improvement in the provision since the last inspection. The school has adopted a nationally recognised programme of work, which it has adapted to suit a two-year cycle of topics. The programme helps to ensure a unified approach to the teaching of history throughout the school, full coverage of topics and the systematic development of pupils' skills. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were good in one case and very good in the other. There is a good emphasis on research methods and good links with other subjects. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 not only consider what is to be learnt about life in Ancient Greece from a study of ceramics, but attempt in art lessons to make replica pots.
75. In the one **geography** lesson seen, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory because the teacher had too many learning objectives, so that pupils were unsure of what they were trying to achieve. Pupils in Year 6 develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of places through work in their 'Passport to the World' study.
76. There is not enough use made of visits and visitors to bring interest and relevance to pupils' learning in both history and geography. There is some evidence of the Internet being used to support learning in the humanities but this largely involves pupils printing off sheets of information, rather than using it for genuine research.

Religious education

Provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The revised agreed syllabus for religious education is not fully implemented.
- Management of the subject is underdeveloped.

Commentary

77. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection; both were in Years 3 to 6 and involved the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed a good understanding of the message from the story while pupils in Years 5 and 6 were less clear about the definition of a parable.
78. Because of staffing difficulties the recently revised agreed syllabus has not been fully embedded and the management of the subject is not ensuring consistency across the school; this accounts for the variable attainment. Progress from the previous inspection is unsatisfactory, as the issues regarding implementation, coverage and resources have not been fully addressed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

79. Insufficient work was seen to make overall judgements about provision in art and design, design and technology, and music. Evidence from a small number of lessons in design and technology and in music, work on display and discussions with teachers makes it possible to identify some strengths and weaknesses.
80. Leadership and management of **art and design** are satisfactory. The coordinator is very enthusiastic but her influence is limited by the fact that she only works in the school for three days each week. She is in the early stages of keeping records of assessment and evidence from all ages. She has monitored work in sketchbooks and reported that the approach is not consistent across the school. The use of the current scheme of work has been uninspiring and, as a result, standards are generally below expectations. To address this, the coordinator has made links with an advanced skills teacher at the local secondary school. He will be working with her to produce a new scheme of work and run workshops for both the teachers and the pupils to develop skills in drawing and painting.
81. **Design and technology** is identified on the curriculum map and is sometimes linked to other subjects. During the inspection pupils in Years 1 and 2 developed their designing and making skills very well. The pupils were extremely enthusiastic and described in great detail how they had designed, assembled and added the detail to their model. During the plenary³ session, the teacher challenged them to evaluate the houses. One pupil described a good feature of a house, which had been finished with sandpaper tiles, by saying that it looked like there was concrete in the gaps. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator has spent time with a specialist teacher writing a policy and producing proformas to support the teaching and learning of designing, planning, making and evaluating for Years 1 to 6. These have not been implemented consistently and monitoring to ensure that practice is embedded has been identified as an action in the school improvement plan.
82. At the time of the last inspection, teachers' planning in **music** was found to be unsatisfactory and there was no scheme of work, instruments were inaccessible. There has been significant improvement since that time. The coordinator has introduced a scheme of work that provides

³ Plenary refers to parts of lessons when all of the pupils are taught together as a class rather than working individually or in small groups.

good support to non-specialist teachers and she has improved the range and accessibility of instruments. There are now more extra-curricular opportunities for making music, for example the choir, two recorder groups and for learning to play other instruments. Pupils clearly enjoy singing and do so to a good standard in assemblies. Singing in two parts was good in a lesson with pupils from Years 3 and 4. Planning for the lesson was based on the project designed to promote literacy through the arts, but unfortunately the teacher did not make sure that the lesson started on time and so its potential was not fully realised. Pupils did show a good sense of the sounds made by different instruments and how to work together to compose a soundscape depicting fire. A well planned and taught lesson enabled pupils in Years 5 and 6 to demonstrate good learning in terms of composing a pentatonic melody for a given rhythm and lyric. This lesson was successful because the teacher demonstrated clearly what she wanted done and displayed high expectations that the pupils could carry out the set task. She provided a good focus for pupils to listen to each other's compositions in terms of key features and made sure that pupils with special educational needs had an early opportunity to share their work. Although this lesson ran for its allotted time, it was too short for all pupils to re-visit their compositions after performing them. Nevertheless, most pupils achieved well in composition and in recording their note sequences for future performance.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good standards in swimming.
- The coordinator provides enthusiastic and well-informed leadership.
- The quality of teaching is good and this promotes good learning and achievement.

Commentary

83. By the time the pupils reach Year 6 their standards in physical education are average but good in swimming. The school has at least maintained the standards found at the time of the last inspection. The good facilities, including the school's own pool, and regular, good quality tuition from a swimming coach, who works with all the pupils but in relatively small groups, mean that standards in swimming are above average. Young pupils are confident in the water; pupils in Year 1 happily dive under the surface. Older pupils display a range of strokes, using correct breathing techniques and arm movements. Pupils are encouraged in their achievement by the use of a range of awards developed by the coach. Any pupils not swimming strongly are offered extra tuition. Only a certain level of absenteeism amongst older pupils stops standards being even higher.
84. The school offers a broad curriculum, including a good range of games activities, as well as outdoor and adventurous activities including orienteering on the school's ample site. The programme is inclusive and care is taken to involve fully pupils with special physical needs. A pupil is given special confidence building activities in a swimming lesson and another is helped to play a full part in a dance lesson with the help of a teaching assistant. Teaching assistants play a full part in the physical education programme and run an after-school basketball club where pupils show good levels of movement and ball handling skills. Extra-curricular activities provide good support for learning in physical education; for example, the hockey club attracts good levels of support. Links with other local schools are good and teachers from the secondary school help pupils' achievement by offering expert tuition in gymnastics. Inter-school matches give pupils opportunities to develop their skills in competitive situations.
85. Teaching is good overall. Teachers dress appropriately, emphasising the importance of the subject. They take a vigorous lead in lessons, giving good examples in demonstrations. They make good use of pupil demonstration and evaluate these performances. In a good lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, learning hockey skills, higher-attaining pupils devised their own game

activity and then refined and developed this after the evaluation offered by the teacher. This helped their learning and that of watching pupils. Inaccessibility of resources sometimes limits achievement. In the same lesson, there were insufficient hockey sticks for each pupil to have one, so limiting the time and opportunity individual pupils had to develop stickhandling skills. The coordinator provides good leadership, giving unstintingly of her time to enable pupils to have access to a wide range of good quality opportunities. She has identified that the scheme of work needs improving in order that the expected time allocation to different aspects of the curriculum is clear, alongside improving the storage and accessibility of resources.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. No overall judgement is made about provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship because only one short lesson was observed. However, it was clear that concern for the development of pupils' moral and social understanding to encourage citizenship and awareness of personal worth is increasingly permeating the life and work of the school. The coordinator, with the active support of the headteacher, provides very good leadership and support for colleagues. Health education is effectively taught, especially through science and physical education.
87. There are regular timetabled lessons in personal, social and health education and citizenship, including circle time. The school council and newly formed family groups provide good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to develop their understanding of citizenship. Members of the school council took part in the process of interviewing for the new headteacher and have attended meetings of the governing body.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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