

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Halstead, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115133

Headteacher: Mrs D Jackson

Lead inspector: Mr M Newell

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th February 2004

Inspection number: 257564

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	219
School address:	Matthews Close Halstead Essex
Postcode:	CO9 2BH
Telephone number:	01787 475699
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Remfry
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Halstead in Essex. The school gained Investors in People recognition in 2003. There are the full time equivalent of 219 pupils attending the school with a similar number of boys and girls. The school is similar in size to other primary schools nationally. Many pupils live close to the school, but a significant minority travels from further afield. There is no significant level of pupil mobility. The great majority of pupils are of white ethnic origin and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs stands at approximately 6 per cent, which is well below the national average, and the percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need is also below the national average. The nature of special educational need covers moderate learning difficulties, social and behavioural difficulties and autism. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is less than 3 per cent and this is below the national average. Attainment when children start school covers the full ability range and is at an average level overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10638	Mr M Newell	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Personal, social and health education and citizenship
15181	Mrs M Hackney	Lay inspector	
28200	Mr P Stevens	Team inspector	English History Geography
32255	Mrs D Blizzard	Team inspector	Special educational needs Foundation Stage Science Music Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **satisfactory** school where the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1-2, but achievement could be better for some pupils in Years 3-6. The very good provision that the school makes for pupils' moral and social development makes a significant contribution to pupils' very positive attitudes and high standards of behaviour. There are notable strengths in teaching, but assessment could be better. Although the headteacher leads the school well, the role that governors play in the management of the school is not sufficiently developed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, but there is not enough consistent challenge for the higher-attaining pupils, particularly in some classes in Years 3-6.
- Pupils attain above average standards in English, mathematics, science and geography by the end of Year 2 and well above average standards in physical education by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory with good practice in Years 3-6. Teaching in physical education is very good across the school.
- Procedures for assessment and how effective assessment data is used are not sharp enough.
- The head leads the school well but the governing body needs to play a more active role in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well.
- The good provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced by the significant contribution of support staff.
- The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development and well for pupils' cultural development, although pupils are not encouraged enough to take a greater initiative and responsibility for their own learning.
- The school provides good opportunities outside of the formal curriculum for enhancing pupils' learning, good levels of care for pupils and has established good links with parents and the community.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The school has functioned under quite difficult circumstances of high staff turnover, problems in recruiting staff, and financial restraints. Despite this, the school still set about tackling the identified issues in a rigorous manner although improvements in standards and assessment have not been as significant as the school would have wished.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. Inspection findings show that by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and at an average level in science where pupils' scientific skills are not as well developed as their scientific knowledge. Achievement in all three subjects is satisfactory overall, and stronger for the oldest and youngest pupils at this key stage, as at times there is not enough challenge for some groups of higher-attaining pupils. The above average standards reflect the natural ability of the pupils. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level apart from in geography where they are above average and in physical education where they are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 because of the high-quality specialist teaching which enables all pupils to achieve well.

Inspection findings show that in Years 1-2, pupils achieve well and standards are above average in English, mathematics, science and geography and well above average in physical education. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory.

Attainment when children start school is average. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well and at times very well and by the end of the Foundation Stage most children have exceeded the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year in all areas of learning except in knowledge and understanding of the world where attainment is at an expected level and achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good levels of support, provision and teaching that enable them to achieve well. Inspection evidence shows that there is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls that cannot be explained by natural ability differences.

The school makes **good** overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with particular strengths in the provision made for pupils' moral and social development. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, although pupils could be encouraged to take more initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Although attendance is above the national average overall, too many parents take their children on holiday during term time despite the fact that they are reminded regularly of the effect this has on their children's progress. Punctuality is generally good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory** overall with some strong features. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall and good in the Foundation Stage, good in Years 1-2

and satisfactory with good features in Years 3-6. Teaching is at its best when it is challenging or demanding or for the younger children when they learn through executing practical tasks alongside the direct teaching of key communication and mathematical skills. At times teaching is simply not demanding or challenging enough. Throughout the school, teaching assistants make a powerful contribution to how well pupils learn. Assessment procedures overall and the use made of assessment data for target setting, informing planning and for tracking pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. The satisfactory curriculum in Years 1-6 is enhanced well by a good range of visits and visitors and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum provision for physical education is very good. The school is a caring and supportive school where the views of pupils are listened to well. This adds to the ethos of the school which is further enhanced by the good links with parents and with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory** overall with the headteacher providing good leadership and setting a clear and accurate agenda for school improvement. The leadership of key staff is satisfactory, although the subject leadership of English and mathematics are strengths of the school and provide models of good practice for other subjects. Management is satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory. The governors of the school do not play an active enough role in the strategic management of the school or in holding the school to account for the quality of education that it provides.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are happy with the school and the quality of education that it provides. Most parents feel that their children achieve well and make good progress. The majority of parents are very supportive and provide valuable help for their children at home, but there are some parents who find it difficult to maintain a partnership with the school. Although the majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school to ask questions or discuss concerns, there are a minority who feel that their questions are not always well received, even though the school sends out questionnaires to parents to seek their views.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and take part with enthusiasm in the activities that are provided for them both within and outside of the formal curriculum. The pupils value the school council, know that their views will be listened to and know that should they have any worries or concerns they will be dealt with sensitively by any member of the teaching or non-teaching staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, setting targets and then tracking pupils' progress towards targets are not rigorous or effective enough.
- The tasks that are set for some higher-attaining pupils, particularly but not exclusively in Years 3-6, are not demanding or challenging enough.
- Governors do not play a sufficiently proactive role in shaping the educational direction of the school or in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides.
- Pupils are not encouraged to take enough initiative and responsibility for their own learning.

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. Achievement is **good** for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and **satisfactory** overall for pupils in Years 3-6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their educational lives.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well.
- There is not enough challenge and demand for some higher-attaining pupils particularly, but not exclusively, in Years 3-6.
- Standards in physical education are well above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve well in geography in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

1. The children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well in most areas of learning. Attainment when children start at school covers the full ability range and is at an average level overall. The good quality of teaching and learning opportunities result in many children exceeding the nationally-recommended Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning except in knowledge and understanding of the world where attainment is at an expected level and achievement is satisfactory and could be better.

KEY STAGE 1

2. On the basis of the National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments in 2003 for Year 2 pupils, attainment was well above the national average in reading, above average in mathematics and in line with the national average in writing. When compared to similar schools attainment was above average in reading, average in mathematics and below average in writing. Teacher assessments in science show attainment to be at an average level. Inspection findings show that attainment in English and mathematics is above average with pupils achieving well, although just occasionally work could be better tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils. Standards are at an average level in science, but improving at a good rate because of the increased emphasis that is being put on pupils learning through investigative and practical activities. Any differences between test results and inspection findings can be explained by the natural ability differences of the pupils. Standards in physical education are well above average because of the high quality specialist teaching and pupils achieve well and at times very well. Standards in geography are above average with pupils developing knowledge and skills at a good rate. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory and at times good within individual lessons when matched by good quality teaching.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2- average points score in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.1(18.5)	15.7(15.8)
Writing	15.1(15.6)	14.6(14.4)
Mathematics	17.3(18.7)	16.3(16.5)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

KEY STAGE 2

3. On the basis of the 2003 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils, attainment was above the national average in English and in line with the national average in mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools attainment was well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. The trend in improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend. The value-added measure between Year 2 and Year 6 has been above average. Inspection findings show that standards in English and mathematics are above average. Standards in science are at an average level. However, evidence indicates that the above average standards reflect the natural ability of the pupils and achievement is satisfactory overall because work is not consistently demanding and challenging for some higher-attaining pupils. Achievement is stronger for the younger and oldest pupils at this key stage. Standards in physical education are well above average with all pupils achieving well because of the high quality of the specialist teaching. Standards in geography are above average and at an average level in all other subjects inspected. Achievement in all these subjects is satisfactory but could be better with the setting of tasks and activities that provide a greater challenge for some of the higher-attaining pupils.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 - average points score in 2003.

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.3(26.6)	26.8(27.0)
Mathematics	26.8(26.2)	26.8(26.7)
Science	29.2(27.0)	28.6(28.3)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good levels of support, particularly from the highly effective teaching assistants, and this enables them to play a full part in all that the school has to offer and to achieve well. There is no significant evidence to indicate that, across the school, boys and girls do not achieve equally well and differences in attainment levels can be explained by natural differences in ability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Their moral and social development is **very good** and their spiritual and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is **satisfactory** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes and they enjoy school.

- Behaviour is very good throughout the school.
- Very good relationships reflect the school's positive ethos.
- Moral and social education are very good.
- Opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to become independent learners are too limited.
- Too many pupils take holidays during term time resulting in a higher than average record of unauthorised absence.

Commentary

- Throughout the school pupils have very good attitudes and they are very interested and keen to learn. Pupils enjoy taking part in many activities and they are enthusiastic and eager to be involved. The very good relationships between pupils and adults encourage pupils to want to learn. Overall, behaviour in all classes is very good. Only occasionally, when teaching is weaker, is behaviour not at this high standard. Pupils behave very well during assemblies and in the playground. Staff have a consistent approach towards behaviour management which reinforces the high expectations of good behaviour through a clear system of rewards and recognition. Pupils value the opportunity to win 'golden time' and certificates. Bullying or harassment of any kind is not tolerated and the school deals effectively with any incidents which arise. Pupils feel confident that staff will deal with any problems promptly.

Exclusions

The school only excludes pupils when all other strategies and sanctions have been exhausted and the small number of exclusions have not had a detrimental impact on the learning of other pupils.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White - British	182	2	0
Mixed - any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British- any other Asian background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0

- Pupils' personal development is good and this contributes well to their progress and achievements. Children in the Foundation Stage settle down quickly and make very good progress in the development of personal and social skills. Older pupils are good ambassadors for the school and make a good contribution to school life. They take their responsibilities on the school council very seriously and are proud of their achievements, particularly in their organisation of the school's healthy tuck shop. Other pupils in all classes are keen to help as monitors. Pupils support one another well as in the effective buddy system between pupils in Year 1 and Year 5. Pupils of all ages work well together with partners and in small groups and they share resources co-operatively and sensibly. However, insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to take

regular responsibility for their own learning and to develop confident and independent research skills.

7. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with a strong emphasis on pupils' moral and social awareness. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships effectively develops pupils' understanding of their responsibilities of living within a community. However, in some lessons opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual awareness and sense of wonder are sometimes missed through insufficient planning. Good provision is made to develop pupils' understanding of their own culture and to celebrate the richness of a diverse multi-cultural society. They take part in maypole dancing, are encouraged to listen to a range of music from different parts of the world and study world faiths. A parent who is a trained Indian dancer works regularly with pupils through well-organised Indian dance workshops.
8. Although attendance is above the national average, overall it is satisfactory because too many parents take their children on holidays during term time. The school works hard to discourage this and parents are reminded regularly of the effect this has on their children's progress. Unauthorised absence is above the national average and this results in pupils missing important parts of their education. Punctuality is generally good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	3.7	School data :	0.5
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 with some notable strengths. Teaching and learning are **good** in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 and **satisfactory** with good features in Years 3-6. Assessment overall is **unsatisfactory**. There are **good** opportunities for enhancing pupils' learning outside of the formal curriculum. The care and welfare of pupils is **good** and links with parents and the community are **good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1-2 teaching is **good**. Teaching in Years 3-6 is **satisfactory** with good practice. Assessment is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage provides good opportunities for children to learn through practical activities alongside the direct teaching of specific key skills.
- Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and often meets the individual needs of pupils.
- Assessment procedures and the use of assessment data are unsatisfactory overall, although they are very good in physical education.

- Although there are good features of teaching in Years 3-6 it is satisfactory overall because at times it does not always meet the needs of the higher-attaining pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a powerful contribution to how well pupils learn.
- The teaching of physical education is a significant strength.

Commentary

9. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection, but the school recognises that there is room for further improvement. Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage. Teachers and support staff work together very well and help to provide a good range of interesting and exciting learning activities. In most instances a good balance is struck between children taking part in practical, 'hands-on' activities and the direct teaching of key skills. Occasionally, teaching is a little too directed and opportunities are missed for children to find things out for themselves.
10. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 in English are generally good and satisfactory with good features in Years 3-6. Reading and writing skills are taught well in Years 1 and 2 and this provides pupils with a good range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words and phrases and to develop good skills for writing for a range of audiences and purposes. There is good practice in Years 3-6 when expectations are high and pupils are expected to read with fluency and expression. Good practice is also evident where pupils are taught the skills to locate information quickly and are expected to write pieces of work that are either informative, well presented or are lively and captivating. Teaching is not always at this level and at times does not expect enough of the higher-attaining pupils, or pupils are not directly taught key research skills that would help them to become more independent in their learning.
11. In mathematics, teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 where pupils are systematically taught mathematical skills and concepts in a lively and interesting manner and are generally provided with good and challenging investigative tasks where these skills can be put to the test. Occasionally, more could be asked of the higher-attaining pupils. In Years 3-6, teaching is satisfactory with good practice for the oldest and youngest pupils. Here work is often pitched at the right level for pupils of differing abilities and pupils are expected to engage in challenging investigative tasks. When teaching is not as effective, it is because work is too easy and undemanding for the higher-attaining pupils or not enough attention is paid to addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding before introducing new concepts or learning. In these instances, progress is hindered. Teaching in science, across the school, is satisfactory with good practice. Scientific knowledge is developed well and teaching is most effective when pupils are encouraged to investigate, find things out for themselves or initiate their own investigations. At times, teaching is too directed and pupils' natural curiosity is curbed and the learning of the more able pupils is not pushed on enough.
12. Teaching in information and communication technology is satisfactory with good features. It is most effective when pupils can put newly learnt skills immediately to use in interesting and exciting tasks. A significant strength is the high quality of teaching in physical education. Teaching across the school is carried out by the co-ordinator whose subject knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise motivates the pupils to a high level and enables all pupils to achieve well and attain high standards. Teaching and learning in other subjects is satisfactory and good when learning is brought to life through visits or visitors to school in subjects such as history and geography. In art and design, teaching is good when pupils are directly taught a wide range of artistic skills and then offered a good range of media in which to work, and where pupils are encouraged to experiment. When teaching is not as effective as it could be in the

foundation subjects, it is usually because the tasks that pupils are expected to complete are the same, irrespective of the ability of the pupil.

13. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. This is due to the quality of teaching which is never less than satisfactory and often good, but particularly because of the high quality support that is provided by the teaching assistants, which makes a significant and powerful contribution to the good progress that pupils make.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	9 (24%)	18 (49%)	9 (24%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages for the 37 lessons seen.

14. Assessment overall is unsatisfactory. Assessment procedures are good in English, mathematics, special needs and for children in the Foundation Stage. Assessment procedures in physical education are very good and very good use is made of the information to guide and inform planning. Procedures are satisfactory in science and developing well in information and communication technology. They are not at a consistently satisfactory level in other subjects, which means that teachers do not have a good enough grasp of what pupils can or cannot do, and there is insufficient information to guide and inform lesson planning. The main weakness, however, is that not enough rigorous use is being made of available assessment data to set challenging targets for individual pupils or for small groups and then to carefully track and evaluate pupils' progress towards set targets. The marking of pupils' work is too variable and inconsistent. There is good practice in both key stages but at times marking is cursory and does not clearly outline what pupils need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** with some good strengths. The enrichment of the curriculum is **good**. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- The curriculum provision for physical education is very good.
- There is a good range of activities provided outside of the formal curriculum which enhances pupils' learning.
- There are not enough opportunities provided which would enhance pupils' abilities to be more independent learners.
- There are some shortcomings in accommodation and resources.

Commentary

15. The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection because planning and provision is now satisfactory and of a better standard, although the school recognises that there is still room for further improvement in the investigative elements of science, in research skills and in developing the pupils as more independent learners.

16. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are embedded in school practice and there are good examples of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills being put to good use in other subjects of the curriculum. However, this good practice is not always as consistent as it could be. Increasingly good use is being made of computers to support pupils' learning in other areas of the curriculum. The provision that is made for physical education is very good. Pupils benefit from high quality teaching and are able to participate in a wide range of physical activities both during the school day and after school. The school's commitment to developing pupils' physical skills is very good and also brings another dimension to pupils' personal development. Provision in other curriculum areas is satisfactory and fully meets statutory requirements.
17. The provision offered to children in the Foundation Stage is good because it meets the needs of young children well. The curriculum offered to children is well planned and enables children to achieve well through a wide and varied range of experiences that help to make learning fun and enjoyable.
18. The school provides well for the enrichment of pupils' learning through the good number of visits and through the many visitors it invites to the school to raise interest and encourage the pupils, which include theatre groups, storytellers and artists. Pupils visit many places of educational and cultural interest often linked to specific topics. These have included Colchester Castle and Zoo, the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge and Mersea Island. Pupils have also attended productions of the Ballet at Covent Garden and the London Philharmonic at the Barbican. All these make a valuable contribution to pupils' education as well as enhancing their social and cultural development.
19. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship. Discussions within class enable pupils to talk about their views, feelings and opinions and to converse about moral and social issues. The very good relationships that are evident in school make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The science curriculum incorporates the required aspects of health education. A strong community spirit is evident in school and pupils are well aware of the concept of citizenship as became clear in discussions with pupils.
20. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator has developed very good systems to ensure that there are good learning opportunities and support for pupils with special educational needs. Early identification, good communication with parents, good individual target setting and assessments enable pupils to achieve well and make good progress. The school makes flexible, supportive and successful arrangements for special needs work, including lunchtime clubs in the computer suite using individualised programmes for learning.
21. The school has sufficient qualified teachers to teach the National Curriculum. The provision of support staff is very good throughout the school. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and when working with small groups. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. However, some classrooms, and particularly those for older pupils, are small and cramped for the number of pupils on roll. The newly-built entrance and administrative office provides good additional space and a secure reception area. Secure outdoor play facilities for the youngest children are satisfactory and there is sufficient space for the use of large play equipment. There is good provision of grassed and hard surface play areas which are used well for a range of sporting and other learning activities. An attractive garden area based on the elements provides interest and stimulus for pupils. Overall

resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory although budget constraints limit the provision in information and communication technology and books for the library.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. Pupils receive **satisfactory** support, advice and guidance. They are involved **well** in decision-making about the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a happy and safe environment where pupils are valued and well cared for.
- All adults know pupils well and relationships are very good.
- Induction arrangements are good.
- Pupils are involved actively in improving the school environment.

Commentary

22. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils are well supported by staff who know them well and are committed to ensuring that all pupils learn in a safe and secure environment. Parents speak highly of the welfare provided and pupils identify the school as very caring and feel they are very well looked after. Health and safety issues are monitored well through regular risk assessments. Child protection procedures are good and all staff are well informed about their responsibilities. Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with teachers and support assistants. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported during lessons and they are helped to take a full part in all educational opportunities the school has to offer. All pupils receive satisfactory support, advice and guidance from staff but this is restricted by not being based on a consistent system of assessment. The good induction arrangements for pupils ensure that they settle quickly into the school routines and that their parents are well informed and encouraged into a partnership with the school. Pupils in Year 6 are prepared well for their transfer to secondary education.
23. Pupils in Year 6 value their responsibilities as school council members and are particularly enthusiastic about their link with the younger classes. All pupils have the opportunity to make suggestions and to share their ideas for improvements to the school. However, individual classes do not have elected members on the council and this limits the direct opportunity for pupils of all ages to work together and to take responsibility for their own class. Pupils are confident that their views are taken into account and often acted upon.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents. Links with the community are **good**. **Satisfactory** links have been established with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school welcomes parents and encourages them to be involved in their children's learning.

- Regular newsletters and curriculum information keep parents well informed.
- Reports are inconsistent in the amount of clear information provided about pupils' progress.
- The majority of parents support the work of the school well.
- Good links with the community enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

24. The school welcomes parents and encourages them to be involved. The majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school to ask questions or discuss concerns. However, there is a minority who feel that their questions are not always well received even though the school sends out questionnaires to canvass and take on board the comments and suggestions of parents. Parents feel well informed about activities and changes in organisation through the regular newsletters and curriculum information about what pupils are learning. Some parents would like more information about their child's progress. The inspectors agree that although some reports are of a high standard, there are some inconsistencies between classes in the amount of clear information provided about progress and what pupils need to do to improve. The majority of parents are very supportive and provide valuable help for their children at home, but there are some parents who find it difficult to maintain a partnership with the school. A group of parents helps regularly in classrooms and with other activities. Four parents are currently attending a weekly reading workshop with the special needs co-ordinator and this is making a very positive contribution to their children's progress. St Andrew's School Helpers Association is a very supportive group of parents who organise social and fund-raising events to provide the school with a range of additional learning resources.
25. The school has good links with the community, which helps to enrich the curriculum. The school has close links with the church and the clergy are regular visitors to lead acts of Collective Worship. The choir has taken part in a sponsored sing for the community at the local church bazaar. A group of pupils recently received the Braintree District Council winner's certificate for the Yellow Pages Challenge. Good links have been established with the Halstead Library and the librarian visited classes to present pupils with certificates for the successful completion of The Reading Maze. Pupils go out on a range of visits and the local environment is used well as a learning resource for pupils to investigate, experiment and explore. Many visitors from the community make a strong contribution to the work of the school such as the community police and the fire brigade, and some senior citizens have come into the school to talk about their experiences during World War II.
26. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Pupils benefit from the extra-curricular music club provided by a music teacher from the secondary school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 joined with other local schools to take part in a visiting Planetarium experience. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 have taken part in an activity day at St Mark's College, Saffron Walden.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory** overall. The headteacher provides **good** leadership and key staff provide **satisfactory** leadership overall. Management is **satisfactory**. Governance of the school is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The governors do not play an active enough role in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides.
- The management of the Foundation Stage, special needs and some curriculum areas are good.
- Financial planning and monitoring are good.

Commentary

27. The headteacher leads and manages the school well. During the last three years the school has experienced quite a high level of staff turnover and has encountered considerable difficulties in recruiting new staff. In addition, the school has worked under considerable financial restrictions and has had a deficit budget. Despite these circumstances, the headteacher has strived successfully to improve the school and to keep moving the school forward even though the speed of change has not always been at the pace she would have desired. The headteacher has an astute grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and has put in place effective strategies for dealing with identified weaknesses. She is open and frank and recognises that there is still work to be done to improve the school, but has a fierce and determined commitment to improving standards.
28. The recent appointment of the deputy headteacher and the return from absence of other key members of staff now means that the senior management team is at its full complement for the first time in quite a while. The headteacher has given each member clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Already the team is playing an ever-increasingly effective role in improving the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of education that the school provides. All share a vision for raising standards. There are good procedures in place for monitoring teaching and learning in subjects such as English, mathematics, physical education and information and communication technology. Such procedures are becoming increasingly embedded in other areas of the curriculum, although they are not yet at their maximum effectiveness to have the greatest impact on raising standards. Some of the subject co-ordinators carry out analyses of test and assessment data, but more effective use could be made of this data in setting targets for individual pupils and in closely monitoring their progress towards stated targets.
29. The Foundation Stage is managed well and ensures that the provision is geared towards meeting the needs of young children and in ensuring that they get a good start to their educational lives. Good induction procedures are in place and this creates the foundations for the partnership with parents which continues to develop as pupils move through school. Management of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator ensures that early identification procedures are rigorously carried out and targets support to where the need is greatest. The co-ordinator leads and manages very well, and has organised workshops for parents to enable them to understand how they can help their child at home, particularly with reading.
30. Governance of the school is unsatisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school. However, not enough governors have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they do not play a proactive role in shaping the direction of the school, questioning how well the school is doing or in holding the school to account for the quality of education that it provides.

31. Financial planning is good. The school has had to operate a deficit budget during the last two years because of staffing and other changes, but financial prudence has meant that this situation will be addressed over the next two years. The financial restraint under which the school has operated meant that financial monitoring has had to be very effective and rigorous. There has had to be cut backs in terms of resources and teacher training. However, the hard work and commitment of all the staff have meant that the impact on pupils' learning has been kept to a minimum. The school constantly seeks to ensure that it gets the best possible value from any goods or services purchased. Any available funding is used most effectively to support the educational priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Day-to-day administration and financial management carried out by the office staff is of a high standard and ensures the smooth and efficient running of the school.

Financial Information for the Year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	538 912	Balance brought forward from previous year	43 880
Total expenditure	562 486	Balance carried forward to the next	20 306
Expenditure per pupil	2 403		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision is **good** in the Foundation Stage

32. The quality of provision has improved well since the time of the last inspection. When children start school, attainment covers the full ability range and is at an average level overall. The overall good quality of teaching that children benefit from ensures that they get off to a good start in their educational lives. By the time that children start in Year 1, attainment exceeds the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals and children achieve well in all areas of learning, except in knowledge and understanding of the world, which is at an expected level, and achievement is satisfactory. Provision for children with special educational needs is good.
33. There are currently 8 children attending mornings only, 26 attending full time and 10 of the full time pupils are in a mixed reception and Year 1 class. The environment and resources, including the outdoor provision, is satisfactory.
34. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The co-ordinator ensures that the curriculum is monitored well and that it is geared towards providing activities that enhance children's learning well. Good induction procedures are in place to ensure that children make a smooth transition into the school and keep parents well informed about what and how their child will learn. Parents are supportive of their child's education and form a good partnership with staff in the Foundation Stage.
35. Teaching is at least good across all the areas of learning with the exception of knowledge and understanding of the world, where teaching is satisfactory. Teachers and support staff are good role models and have high expectations of behaviour, which results in good learning. Practitioners make good day-to-day assessments of children's achievements, however, on occasions not enough use is made of this information to plan accurately for the higher-attaining children.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between children and adults create positive atmospheres for learning.
- Children achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Practitioners act as positive role models through what they say and do.
- Children are not encouraged often enough to select activities and resources independently.

Commentary

36. By the time they start in Year 1 many children exceed the expected early learning goals and achieve well. This is due to good teaching and well planned and organised activities. Children are confident and eager to please and work diligently at the tasks they are given, taking pride in their achievements. Children are familiar with all the

classroom routines, know what is expected of them and respond well. There is a happy and harmonious atmosphere in the classroom. All children have developed positive relationships with adults who act as good role models. Children know that their efforts and opinions are valued and this builds their confidence and self-esteem well. They understand the basic rules, such as raising their hands to offer their views, opinions, answers and they listen well to others. Children's ability to select and use resources independently, or to exercise initiative, is limited because there are too few opportunities to do this.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good teaching and learning of the basic skills of reading and writing.
- Children's literacy skills are developed in everyday situations.
- Very good use is made of teaching assistants and other adult support.

Commentary

37. Many children exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time that they start in Year 1 and children of all abilities achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and early reading and writing skills are taught very well. Staff read stories with great animation and this captures the interest and attention of the children. By the end of the reception year, many children have acquired good early reading skills, know many letter names and sounds and the higher-attaining children are writing independently. All staff have good subject knowledge and are keen and enthusiastic role models. There are good links with home to ensure that pupils make a good start within their early reading and writing. Drama activities like re-enacting the *Three Little Pigs* provide good speaking, listening and sequencing opportunities. Teachers lead, manage and deploy support assistants and parent helpers strategically with small groups, thus maximising the learning opportunities for everyone. There is a good team spirit and teaching assistants and other adult helpers contribute much to children's learning and to the very pleasant learning ethos that surrounds the Foundation Stage.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching provides lots of opportunities for children to learn through practical activities.
- Assessment of children does not always effectively feed into planning.
- Children learn about numbers well through songs and rhyme.

Commentary

38. Teaching and learning are good and enable children to exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time that they start in Year 1. Children have a good knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and use a good mathematical vocabulary. Children are directly taught numeracy skills and mathematical concepts which are then reinforced in a fun way through a good range of practical and 'hands-on' tasks and

activities. Children's learning is often reinforced through the regular and thoroughly enjoyable singing of rhymes and songs. When, for example, singing *Ten Green Bottles*, children learn to add and take away one most effectively. Children participate well, portraying good behaviour and attitudes. Assessments of what the children already know do not always and consistently inform planning and occasionally teaching does not challenge the higher-attaining children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are too few opportunities for children to investigate independently, to raise questions and to suggest solutions.
- Good opportunities are provided to help children become aware of differences in culture.

Commentary

39. Children of all abilities achieve satisfactorily and attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching capitalises well on children's natural curiosity to find out about the world in which they live. Teaching ensures that children learn through lots of practical activities with sand, water and different materials, but at times these activities are too directed rather than allowing the children to find things out for themselves. Walks in the local environment give children a satisfactory awareness of different buildings and landmarks in the area and demonstrate that where they live may be very different from other parts of the world. For example, they learn about China through handling artefacts and by looking at the globe comparing China with England. Satisfactory use is made of computers to support children's learning and they operate them in a satisfactory manner. Discussions about feelings and happenings in their lives and the lives of people from different cultures foster a good early awareness of the importance of care and respect for others.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Individual pupil assessment in physical education informs future planning very well.
- Teaching in formal physical education lessons is very good.

Commentary

40. The good and at times very good teaching ensures that attainment exceeds the early learning goals by the end of the reception year and all children achieve well. In formal physical education lessons, which are taken by the subject co-ordinator, the co-ordinator makes very good ongoing assessments of children's learning which are used very effectively to inform future planning. Very good subject knowledge and high expectations of the children ensure that they are all challenged rigorously. As a result, their physical skills are developing rapidly and many show great physical control and discipline. There are well-established routines for children to use large and small

equipment and they move the equipment with great care, and recognise the importance of safety and co-operation. Children listen very well because lessons are well paced and fully-inclusive. Visual clues are used to reinforce learning along with a variety of other media such as music and action rhymes. Children are given very good opportunities to think about how they can improve their work and do so well. The direct teaching, in the classroom, of the skills such as cutting and joining means that children use scissors and other small tools in a satisfactory and safe manner.

Creative development

41. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on provision or standards in this area, though it is clear that there are many opportunities for children to use their imagination through carefully planned art work, focused musical activities and imaginative role-play.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well, but achievement for some pupils in Years 3-6 could be better.
 - Teaching is good in Years 1-2 with some good features in Years 3-6.
 - Teaching and learning are monitored well.
 - The use made of assessment information is not effective enough.
42. On the basis of the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 pupils in 2003, attainment was well above the national average in reading and in line with the national average in writing. When compared to similar schools, attainment was above average in reading and below average in writing. In the tests for Year 6 pupils, attainment was above the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools on the basis of prior attainment. Inspection findings show attainment to be above average by the end of Year 2. Pupils of all abilities achieve well and only occasionally do pupils not achieve as well as they could. By the end of Year 6, standards are also above average overall but this reflects the natural ability of the pupils as achievement overall in Years 3-6 is no more than satisfactory. Whilst achievement is stronger for the oldest and youngest pupils at this key stage, there are too many occasions when work is not sufficiently challenging for the higher-attaining pupils, particularly in writing. Any differences between test results and inspection findings can be explained by differences in the natural ability of the different groups of pupils and there is no significant evidence of differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
43. By the end of Year 2, pupils like holding discussions, listen attentively to the teacher and classmates and speak well. Teachers create an encouraging atmosphere where pupils volunteer comments without being asked. By the time that pupils leave school, they speak politely and confidently to one another and to adults in a variety of situations and use an expansive vocabulary. Most pupils listen attentively to one another when they read out their work. However, there are times when some teachers do not encourage pupils enough to justify their views or to put forward ideas and this prevents learning from being stronger.

44. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read their books fluently and with good expression. They confidently discuss characters in stories. Although pupils use the contents and index of books well, they do not know how to locate a particular book in the library. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment in reading with understanding is above average and many read with good expression. Pupils confidently explain why they would recommend a particular book, but too few compare the styles of different authors. Referencing skills are not sufficiently well developed and this restricts pupils' ability to be independent learners.
45. By the end of Year 2, pupils begin to develop a good style in their stories as well as being mostly accurate with their grammar and punctuation. Their handwriting is well formed and they make good attempts at spelling quite long words. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made satisfactory progress in their writing and, although writing is well structured into paragraphs and sometimes extended, not enough expectation is made of pupils' grammar and handwriting earlier in the key stage. Whilst story and account writing often start off in a lively fashion, they fizzle out too easily.
46. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and satisfactory with good practice in Years 3-6. In Years 1 and 2 reading and writing skills are taught well. Good questioning and good use of imaginative texts keep pupils interested. Teachers create an encouraging atmosphere where pupils volunteer comments without being asked. This results from positive attitudes to work encouraged by teachers' high expectations and rigorous but supportive marking. In Years 3-6, teaching is most effective when work is accurately matched to the pupils' ability and when high expectations are set in terms of the accurate use of grammar, how writing is to be sustained over an extended time and how work is to be presented. Although the teaching of reading and writing skills is satisfactory, there are times when skills such as research and referencing are not taught in a direct and rigorous manner. When teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because of low expectations, work not matching the purpose of the lesson or the pace of the lesson simply being too slow. Throughout the school, teaching assistants make a powerful contribution to how well pupils learn and achieve. Whilst there are some very good examples of the marking of pupils' work, there are other examples where marking is cursory and does not tell pupils enough about how to improve.
47. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has seen improvements in the quality of the teaching with the co-ordinator well aware that there is still scope for further improvement. Good assessment procedures are in place but the use made of the data is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that the higher-attaining pupils achieve as well as they could. This has already been identified as an area for improvement in the school development plan. The budget restraints under which the school operates have restricted the quantity and quality of books in the library which means that it is not a good resource for research.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Teachers promote the use of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum in a satisfactory manner. There are some good examples in subjects such as science or in history when pupils wrote letters to their parents as if they were soldiers in World War II. However, there are times when teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to carry out research in subjects such as geography and history.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 and some pupils in Years 3-6 achieve well.
- There is not enough challenge for some pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, in Years 3-6.
- Teaching is most effective when pupils are provided with challenging and demanding practical and investigative tasks.
- Good assessment procedures are in place, but the information could be better used to help improve pupils' achievement.
- The co-ordinator monitors teaching, learning and standards well.

Commentary

49. On the basis of the 2003 National Curriculum tests for Year 2, pupils' attainment was above the national average and average when compared to similar schools. Tests for Year 6 pupils showed attainment to be broadly in line with the national average and average when compared to similar schools on the basis of prior attainment. Inspection findings show that standards by the end of Year 2 are above average and pupils of all abilities achieve well, although just occasionally there could be a greater degree of challenge for the higher-attaining pupils. Inspection findings show that standards are above average at the end of Year 6. This reflects the natural ability of this group of pupils, as achievement is only satisfactory overall in Years 3-6, because there are more instances where there is not enough challenge for the higher-attaining pupils. Achievement is stronger for the oldest and youngest pupils at this key stage. There is no significant evidence of differing achievement between boys and girls. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
50. By the end of Year 2, pupils have good number and good mental agility skills. They have a good understanding of place value and a good knowledge of shape, space and measures. Pupils know the names and properties of many two- and three-dimensional shapes. They are confident at carrying out investigative and problem-solving activities, but are not as confident or secure in tackling problems when presented in word format. The current Year 6 pupils are attaining above average standards. Pupils have a good range of mental strategies which they put to effective use when tackling their number work and problems with which they are presented. They know the properties of a wide range of shapes and handle data in an assured manner as well as having a secure understanding of probability. Again the pupils are not always as confident when transferring their number skills to problems presented in different formats or wordings. There is not always enough expected of the higher-attaining pupils in Years 4 and 5 and this prevents achievement and standards from being better by the time that pupils leave school.
51. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are good and satisfactory with some good practice in Years 3-6. The good range of practical tasks that are provided for the younger pupils in school, alongside the direct teaching of new mathematical concepts, improve learning and help to keep the pupils interested and motivated. Tasks that are set for the younger pupils are usually well matched to their individual needs and lessons move at a good pace. In Years 3-6, teaching is often good for the oldest and youngest pupils where expectations are high and teachers build well on pupils' previous learning. When teaching is less successful it is because work does not take enough account of the differing abilities of the pupils or it is simply too easy for the higher-attaining pupils. On other occasions, not enough attention is paid to what pupils have or

have not learnt in the past, for example expecting pupils to construct complex shapes with a range of angles when they have not been taught how to draw angles. In both these instances pupils' learning and achievement are hampered. Throughout the school teaching assistants make a significant contribution to how well pupils learn. The marking of pupils' work is variable and is at its best when it clearly outlines what pupils need to do to improve.

52. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has monitored teaching and learning for a considerable amount of time and this has helped to improve teaching and provision in the subject, although the co-ordinator does not carry out enough scrutiny of pupils' work. The co-ordinator has a good grasp of the strengths of the subject and the areas for development. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment, but the use made of data for tracking pupils' progress and for target setting is not always rigorous enough in some classes.

Mathematics across the curriculum

53. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Some good examples were observed of mathematics being used to enhance pupils' learning in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography, but there are occasions when opportunities are not capitalised upon.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving by the end of Year 2.
- On occasions, the investigative tasks that are set for the higher-attaining pupils are not challenging enough.
- Teaching assistants make a major contribution to how well pupils learn.
- The use of assessment data to help improve standards is not effective enough.

Commentary

54. On the basis of the 2003 teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils, attainment was at an average level. On the basis of the 2003 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils, attainment was in line with the national average and average when compared to similar schools. Inspection findings show that attainment is at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and that achievement is satisfactory overall in both key stages. However, evidence indicates that standards are starting to rise more quickly in Years 1 and 2 because of the greater emphasis that is being put on investigative and practical work. In Years 3-6, there are times when the work that is set for the higher-attaining pupils is not challenging enough. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
55. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the factors that might influence fair testing and a satisfactory knowledge of life processes, living things, requirements for growth and electricity. Pupils' use of an accurate scientific vocabulary is satisfactory. Standards are improving because the higher-attaining pupils are being increasingly challenged to put their scientific knowledge to the test in more demanding practical activities. However, this good practice has not yet been fully embedded in the

curriculum to have the biggest possible impact on standards. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a satisfactory scientific knowledge across the different aspects of the subject and their use of an appropriate scientific vocabulary is satisfactory. The weakness in teaching and learning is that pupils do not get enough consistent opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding through well planned scientific investigations and the higher-attaining pupils through setting up and initiating their own investigations.

56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. Where lessons are good a lot is expected of pupils. They are encouraged to put their scientific knowledge to effective use in making accurate predictions and hypotheses and are expected to explain why things happen as they do. In such lessons pupils show good initiative and are only too willing to take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning, often working with pupils of all abilities and using challenging and open-ended questioning, which ensures that pupils' knowledge is reinforced and extended. Teaching is not effective when expectations are not high enough and when it is over directed and pupils are not provided with opportunities to find things out for themselves through demanding practical activities. Marking of work is variable and at its best when it makes clear what is necessary for pupils to improve.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Over time, teaching and learning have been monitored in a satisfactory manner, although there has not been enough scrutiny of pupils' work carried out. Not enough use is being made of test and assessment data to track pupils' progress, to set challenging targets or to evaluate pupils' progress towards the stated targets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key skills are being taught well and helping standards to improve.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- A lack of a good number of high quality computers hinders pupils' progress.

Commentary

58. Standards in information and communication technology are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although the school has a computer suite, the size of the room and the number of high quality computers means that not all pupils in a class can work in the suite at the same time. Instead, the class has to be split in half with half the class remaining in class completing other, and at times associated tasks and then rotating around. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because at the last inspection standards were below average.
59. By the end of Year 2, pupils know how to change font size and colour and know how to send work to the printer. They open and close files and are able to merge pictures and text. Pupils have satisfactory keyboard skills and are encouraged to use two hands when typing. They understand technical vocabulary but are less certain of the uses of computers in the wider world. By the end of Year 6, pupils are putting together

PowerPoint presentations where visual and audio effects are incorporated into the presentation. Word processing skills are satisfactory, although some pupils take a long time to input information into the computer because they use a single finger for typing. Pupils use computers competently for research on the Internet, but discussions with pupils suggest that they are not as secure about elements such as the use of logo or electronic mail.

60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good practice. Teaching is at its best when skills are directly taught and then pupils provided with opportunities to put these skills to the test in relevant and interesting activities. Pupils are well managed in the computer suite and, although the more able pupils help out the less able, staff ensure that these higher-attaining pupils are also provided with tasks that are matched to their ability. Many pupils have computers at home and good teaching builds on these skills rather than consolidating what they already know. There are times when there is a need for greater urgency in the lessons or tasks are a little too simplistic and pupils complete them too quickly. This means that groups of pupils are arriving back to class at different times and the teacher then has to repeat over and over what task they are to complete, which wastes valuable teaching time. A teaching assistant with significant expertise in the subject supports teaching and learning very effectively and plays a significant role in helping pupils of all abilities to progress.
61. The subject is well led and managed because the co-ordinator has observed the quality of teaching and learning on many occasions and has a very good grasp of what is needed to move the subject forward. Assessment procedures in both paper and electronic format have recently been introduced and are of a good standard, but have not yet been in practice long enough to have the best possible impact on standards. The school has accurately identified the need to improve resources, which are only just satisfactory, but budgetary restraints have prevented the school purchasing as many good quality computers as it would like.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. The use made of computers to support and enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum is satisfactory, but could be better. Whilst there are some good examples, there are times when opportunities are missed or the programs that are used are a little too simplistic and do not extend pupils' thinking.

HUMANITIES

63. Work was sampled in **history** although insufficient teaching was observed to make a secure judgement on the overall quality of provision. There is nothing to indicate that standards are not at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Discussions with pupils show that they have acquired a satisfactory level of historical knowledge about the periods of history that they have studied, although the younger pupils in school struggle a little with the concept of chronology. Older pupils recognise that there are primary and secondary sources of evidence and are aware of the changes that have taken place in features of people's lives such as technology, fashion and health. However, pupils' research skills, their ability to act as historical investigators and awareness of historical interpretation are the weaker elements. There are no formal procedures in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a good range of visits to places of historical interest, which help to bring the subject to life.

Geography

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in geography.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught well with some good practice in Years 3-6.
- A good range of visits enhances pupils' learning.
- There are no formal procedures in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress.

Commentary

64. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well and achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 3-6. The above average standards attained by the end of year 6 reflect the natural ability of the pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
65. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good awareness of the natural and man-made features of their environment. They also clearly and confidently express opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of living in Halstead, along with ideas for improvement, such as the need for more parks. The more able pupils make comparisons between Halstead and other places and know how different weather affects people's lives. Pupils show a good understanding of how symbols are used on maps. By the end of Year 6, pupils' geographical knowledge of the wider world is above average. They have a good knowledge of climate and know how to use co-ordinates to locate places on a map. However, pupils' knowledge is better than their ability to explain. For example, they know the natural and man-made features of their environment, but cannot compare ways of life in cities and villages. There have been too few instances in some classes for pupils to carry out independent study and research.
66. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2 where teaching strikes a good balance between the development of geographical knowledge and the acquisition of early mapping skills. Teaching and learning are often fun but challenging and take good account of pupils' previous knowledge. Teaching and learning in Years 3-6 is satisfactory with some good practice. Teaching is effective when lessons use a wide array of resources to capture the interest of pupils, as in a Year 6 lesson about Chembakoli. Throughout the school, teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs which enables them to play a full part in all activities. The school makes good use of the local environment and the local community as a learning resource and the good range of visits and visitors enhances pupils' learning.
67. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are monitored in a satisfactory manner. The weaker element is that there are no rigorous assessment procedures in place for assessing and then tracking pupils' progress.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Due to timetable and time constraints, little of the work of the school in these areas was seen. Consequently, no overall judgements on the quality of provision could be made on subjects except in physical education. However, aspects of other subjects were observed and the following represent the inspection findings.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' physical skills are very well developed and many pupils are accomplished athletes.
- The subject co-ordinator's teaching expertise is put to very good use.
- Assessment procedures are very good and effective.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- The development of pupils' physical skills is very well enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular clubs.

Commentary

68. Standards of attainment are well above the national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils of all abilities achieve well. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.
69. By the time that pupils leave school many have very well developed physical skills because of the high quality of teaching and learning experiences provided by the subject co-ordinator, who teaches the subject across the school. By the end of Year 2, pupils have high levels of poise and balance, have a very good awareness of space, interpret music very well using a wide range of exciting and innovative movements and have well developed ball skills. Pupils continue to acquire skills at a good rate as they move through Years 3-6. By the end of Year 6, pupils have very good ball skills, which they put to very good use in a range of different sports. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic sportspeople with a good sense of competition. Swimming standards are high and many pupils are accomplished athletes.
70. Teaching and learning are very good. Physical education is embedded firmly within the school curriculum. Lessons follow a very good pattern. Within each lesson all pupils have the opportunity to warm up, followed by time to remember, time to learn, time to plan, practise and improve, finishing with a cool down and time to evaluate. This consistently good structure enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding very effectively. All this occurs alongside the direct teaching of specific skills and then plenty of time to practise and refine their actions. The very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities that are on offer and which are very well attended further enhances pupils' learning and social development.
71. The subject is well led and managed. As the co-ordinator teaches across the school she has a very good awareness of the standards that pupils attain. She has put in place very good assessment procedures and uses the information well to help her plan lessons and to track pupils' progress.
72. In **art and design**, on the basis of lessons observed and samples of pupils' work, evidence indicates that standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Throughout the school pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities to work with differing media such as paint, pastels, watercolour, charcoal, wax and clay. Planning indicates that pupils are taught specific artistic skills which they can try out in a variety of different activities whether it is painting, drawing, sculpting, weaving or printing. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about the subject and state that they are provided with opportunities to experiment and try things out for themselves. Work around the school shows that pupils are encouraged to put their own creative stamp on

their work rather than all pieces of work looking similar. Provision in the subject adds to pupils' cultural development as they study art from different cultures and some pupils have worked with an African artist in school. Evidence shows that opportunities are regularly provided for pupils to work in three- as well as two-dimensional forms. There are now formal procedures in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress as they move through school.

73. In **design and technology**, evidence of pupils' work indicates that standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Planning shows that the subject is taught regularly, and discussions with pupils illustrates the fact that they are expected to first of all design, then make and finally evaluate a range of different products. Pupils have made packaging for biscuits, musical instruments, small chairs, winding mechanisms and moving vehicles. The pupils are offered the choice of working with a wide range of different materials and are directly taught the skills such as cutting, sewing and joining in order to improve the quality of the finished product. The subject lacks procedures by which pupils' attainment and progress can be assessed and tracked.
74. In **music**, available evidence indicates that standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils sing well in assembly and do so with gusto and enthusiasm. By the time that pupils leave school they have a satisfactory knowledge of famous composers. Planning shows that over the year pupils are provided with opportunities to take part in all elements of the music curriculum, although discussions with pupils indicate that composition is not covered as much as other aspects. The school has a choir and a band and many pupils are offered the chance to play musical instruments. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to listen to and appraise music from different cultures such as Africa and India and put on musical performances both in school and in the wider community. The formal assessing and tracking of pupils' progress is not rigorous or effective enough.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

On the basis of what was observed, provision in this area of the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

75. A formal programme for developing pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship has been implemented and is taught through specific lessons or through circle time. In these sessions pupils are provided with good opportunities to express their views and opinions about a wide range of issues in class and larger group discussions. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for tasks around the school, but more could be done to encourage pupils to take greater responsibility and initiative for their own learning. Health education issues are dealt with well in the science curriculum. Discussions with pupils indicate that this is a school where they feel very confident in making their views, feelings and opinions known and are equally confident that these views will be listened to, respected and acted upon where necessary. In addition the pupils value and are very proud of the school council. Discussions also show that a strong community spirit is evident in the school and pupils are well aware of the concept and importance of citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
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	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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

