

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VA)**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bowers Gifford, Basildon

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115150

Headteacher: Mrs J Palmer

Lead inspector: Colin Henderson

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 257784

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	5 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	284
School address:	London Road Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex
Postcode:	SS13 2DU
Telephone number:	01268 552176
Fax number:	01268 556299
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Edmondson
Date of previous inspection:	February 2002

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided (VA) school is an average-sized primary school. It serves its local community, although a significant proportion of pupils come from outside the immediate area. Pupils come from mainly private housing. Almost all pupils are of white, United Kingdom ethnic background. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Twelve pupils come from a traveller background. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Ten per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average. Their needs are mainly moderate and specific learning difficulties. The school's decision to take children into the reception class in either September or January increased numbers to 42 children in the class. Most classes contain pupils from two year groups. There has been a 70 per cent change in staff in the last two years. The deputy headteacher was acting as headteacher during the inspection, due to the continuing absence, through sickness, of the permanent headteacher. This follows a period in which the headteacher was suspended temporarily, and then re-instated, by the governing body.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23742	Colin Henderson	Lead inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology; art and design; physical education; citizenship
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
30573	Sonia Bosworth	Team inspector	English; geography; history; English as an additional language
26945	Sylvia Gatehouse	Team inspector	Science; design and technology; music; Foundation Stage; special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of St. Margaret's CoE (VA) Primary School is **satisfactory**.

This is an improving school that has a friendly and caring Christian ethos. It encourages pupils to behave very well and have very good attitudes to their work. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and most pupils achieve well in their learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good teaching in Years 5 and 6 helps pupils to attain above average standards. The acting headteacher provides good leadership during the absence of the headteacher. She is supported well by staff and governors. The school gives sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Year 6 pupils attain well above average standards in mathematics and science. They are above average in English.
- Consistently good teaching in Years 5 and 6 and in the reception class promotes good learning.
- The good leadership of the acting headteacher, supported well by staff, governors and advisory staff from the local education authority.
- The expectations of some teachers are not always high enough.
- Standards in art and design and music are below expected levels.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good.
- Information about pupils' progress is not used consistently to meet their learning needs.
- Aspects of school and subject management are not developed enough.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. It has improved standards in writing, the use of homework and teachers' planning. Year 6 pupils are attaining considerably higher standards. There are still some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils. The use of computers in classrooms and pupils' understanding of different cultures needs further improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A\* - top 5 per cent nationally; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E\* - bottom 5 per cent nationally*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2*

Year 6 pupils attain standards that are **well above average** in mathematics and science. They are **above average** in English. Pupils' achievement in Years 5 and 6 is **good** and often very good, promoted by consistently good teaching. Children enter the school with average attainment. They make good progress in their learning in the reception class, promoted by good teaching. They achieve their expected learning goals by the end of the reception year. Year 2 pupils attain **average** standards. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 4 is **satisfactory** overall. Some achieve well, although inconsistencies in some teachers' expectations, especially of more able pupils, limit achievement. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress towards their learning targets.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good**. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching is **satisfactory** overall. It is consistently good in the reception class and in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have high expectations in these years. They are not as consistently high in other years. The school provides **good** care, support and guidance. The curriculum is **good** for the Foundation Stage. It is **satisfactory** for Years 1 to 6. The school makes good use of links with the community to enrich the curriculum. Links with parents are **satisfactory**, although they have been affected by the current uncertainty over the school's leadership.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the acting headteacher is **good**. She is supported well by staff, governors and advisory staff from the local education authority to give a clear direction to the work of the school. The management is **satisfactory** overall. Some senior managers and subject co-ordinators are involved effectively in managing the school, although not all of their roles are developed sufficiently. Governors provide good support and work closely with the staff to evaluate the education provided, manage inclusion well and target improvement.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

A large majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Parents in over 90 per cent of the questionnaires showed that their children liked school, were encouraged to work hard and made good progress. They valued the good teaching and the good range of activities. Nearly 50 per cent of parents were concerned at the events that led to the suspension of the headteacher and the resulting impact on the management of the school. Inspectors found that the acting headteacher was giving good leadership.

Most pupils have positive views of the school. These were clearly reflected in the pupils' questionnaires and in discussions with inspectors. Over 80 per cent indicated that they enjoyed school and found that other children are friendly and teachers are fair. Almost all agreed that there was an adult they could go to if they are worried. Over 30 per cent did not agree that other children behaved well. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour to be very good.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in music and art and design throughout the school and in design and technology in infant classes;
- raise teachers' expectations to a consistently high level;
- extend the roles and contributions of senior managers and subject co-ordinators;
- develop consistent procedures to assess how well pupils are doing in all subjects and use them to guide teachers' plans;
- re-establish effective links with parents;
- improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of living in a multi-cultural society.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils attain **above average** standards by the end of Year 6 in English and science. They are **well above average** in mathematics. Pupils attain **average** standards at the end of Year 2. Achievement is **good** in Years 5 and 6. It is **satisfactory** in other years. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Children in the reception class make good progress and most are likely to achieve their learning goals in all six areas of learning.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6, promoted by consistently good teaching.
- Pupils in other years achieve satisfactorily overall, although teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough, especially of more able pupils.
- Standards in music and art and design are below expected levels.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress towards their learning targets.
- Pupils attain good standards in physical education.

#### Commentary

**Year 2 results** – the 2003 test results were annulled, following an investigation into test procedures.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (28.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.0 (29.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.9 (31.6)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6 show considerable improvement over the last two years. The trend of improvement in recent years has been more rapid than that found nationally. Standards were well below average in 2001. They are now well above the national average and the average of similar schools in mathematics and science. They are above the national average in English and well above the average of similar schools. Inspection evidence reflects these recent Year 6 test results and shows that standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. The school achieved its challenging targets in 2003 for the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the nationally expected Level 4 in English (90 per cent) and in mathematics (98 per cent). It also achieved its targets for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and the results were well above the national average in both subjects. Inspection evidence shows that the school is likely to achieve its challenging targets for 2004 of 94 per cent in English and 95 per cent in mathematics. It is also on target to achieve an above average proportion of pupils who attain Level 5, especially in mathematics. Boys attain equally high standards as girls. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support in their learning from teachers and support staff. Many attain the level expected of their age.
2. Most children enter the reception class with average attainment, although a significant minority have below average levels, especially in personal, social and emotional development. Most settle quickly and happily, including the youngest who have only just started school. The high quality of teaching and leadership in the Foundation Stage promotes children's learning



successfully. The good partnership between teaching and support staff allows each child to be closely supported and their progress frequently assessed. Teachers plan learning activities carefully to match children's needs and use the expertise of teachers and support staff to full effect. Most children achieve well and are likely to achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception year. Some older and more able children are likely to exceed their goals, particularly in mathematical and personal, social and emotional development.

3. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve satisfactorily and attain average standards. These are similar to those at the last inspection, although standards in writing have improved. Inspection evidence reflects the average standards achieved in the national tests for Year 2 pupils in the three years up to 2002. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 and 4, though there are significant inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils in mixed-age classes. They do not always plan learning activities that challenge pupils enough to extend their skills and knowledge, especially the more able. This results in some pupils achieving less in lessons than they should. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well and often very well. Teachers' expectations are consistently higher and they challenge pupils of different abilities well. Most Year 5 and 6 pupils make rapid progress in their learning. This confirms the views of most pupils and parents. Parents in almost 90 per cent of the questionnaires agreed that their children make good progress and are expected to work hard. Many written comments acknowledged the impact of the high quality teaching in Years 5 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs, and the small numbers of pupils from a traveller background, benefit from effective support given by teachers and good quality support staff. They achieve well in most lessons and make good progress towards their learning targets.
4. Most pupils attain nationally expected levels for their age in information and communication technology (ICT), geography and history. They attain above expected levels in physical education where teachers' good subject knowledge extends pupils' skills and knowledge. Standards in design and technology meet nationally expected levels in Year 6. However, they are below expectations in Year 2 where pupils do not have a sound grasp of the process of designing and making. Standards in music and art and design are below the levels expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is lower than at the last inspection. Staff changes have resulted in weaknesses in some teachers' subject expertise. They do not develop pupils' skills and knowledge effectively by building successfully on prior learning. This results in pupils achieving less and attaining lower standards.

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

The school's **very good** provision for pupils' moral and social development promotes **very good** attitudes and behaviour. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is **satisfactory**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of behaviour are consistently very good throughout the school.
- In lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to put their personal qualities and social skills into practice.
- Assemblies are used well to help all pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes and values that support the school's caring, Christian ethos.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development are not planned.
- The attendance levels are unsatisfactory and below the national average.

### **Commentary**

5. The school has a warm and caring Christian ethos. It is a well-ordered community with a clear sense of purpose. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They have very positive attitudes to their work, show respect towards adults and each other, and take responsibilities seriously. Pupils are encouraged to care for one another. For example, there is a buddy system where older pupils are paired with younger ones, and pupils help teachers prepare classrooms at the

beginning of the school day. A good feature of personal development is the 'peer mediation' system when pupils help others to sort out minor disputes. Pupils' achievement is supported well by their personal qualities of determination and perseverance, and their willingness to do their best.

6. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to put their personal and social skills into practice. In pairs or small groups, pupils are encouraged consistently to cooperate and help each other in lessons. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the sort of personal qualities that the school values, for example feeling responsible for others less fortunate and having respect for others in the community. Most pupils say they like school. They understand the role of the peer mediators and know they are there to help if needed. Parents say their children like school and behaviour is good.
7. Pupils are tolerant and caring towards each other, and know the difference between right and wrong. Their awareness of responsibility to others is heightened by the school's support of particular charities. However, opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development are often not identified in teachers' planning, for example in literature, art and music. The school promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of different religious festivals effectively, although it does not provide enough opportunities to celebrate the cultural traditions of different ethnic groups, for example, those from a traveller background. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different races that live in Britain today is still under-developed. This was a minor issue at the time of the last inspection. The school is aware of its lack of action in this matter and plans to improve it.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	8.0
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

8. The low attendance figures relate in many respects to the irregular attendance of the traveller children as well as a large number of families taking holidays in term time. This was a factor affecting the school's attendance at the time of the last inspection. Without these absences, the level of attendance in the school would be broadly in line with national averages. The school has taken action to address these issues. The office manager carefully monitors absences and works closely with the educational welfare officer to follow up individuals with irregular attendance. However, it is evident that the lack of attendance of many of these pupils is impacting on their levels of achievement. The parents of these children are not supporting the school by ensuring their children attend regularly. A small number of parents are also not ensuring that their children arrive at school punctually in the mornings. On occasions, this disrupts the start of the school day.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African

No of pupils on roll
138
0
0
1
0

Mixed – White and Asian	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0
Black or Black British – African	2
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0
Chinese	0
Any other ethnic group	0
No ethnic group recorded	95

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. Teaching was good in the lessons observed. An analysis of pupils' work shows that it is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. Inconsistencies in teachers' expectations in other years do not ensure that pupils always achieve as well as they could.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is good, and often very good. It enables pupils to make rapid progress in their learning.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. It helps children to settle quickly into school and achieve well.
- Some teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils' work, especially of more able pupils in mixed-age classes.
- Some teachers do not use consistently the information on how well pupils are doing to match activities to the range of learning needs and to tell pupils how to improve of their work.
- Teachers manage their classes well to maintain good behaviour and encourage positive attitudes to learning.
- Inconsistencies in teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in music, art and design and ICT, limit pupils' achievements.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10 (21%)	20 (42%)	13 (28%)	4 (9%)	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.*

9. Teaching has been maintained at the satisfactory level reported in the last inspection. The high level of staff change has contributed well to improving teaching quality overall, although recent staff absence has not ensured a consistently good quality. There were examples of good teaching in each year group. This enabled pupils to achieve well in those lessons and reflected the positive views of most parents and pupils. Parents in 95 per cent of the questionnaires valued the good quality of teaching. Teaching remains good in the reception class. This enables children to settle happily into the class routines. Teaching and support staff work very effectively together to provide good support for children, based on good day-to-day assessments. Children make good progress towards the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year.
10. Teaching has improved considerably in Years 5 and 6 and is now a significant factor in raising standards of attainment to above average levels. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan a good range of learning activities and challenge pupils effectively to apply and extend their skills and knowledge. This helps a good proportion of pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve well. This was clearly evident in an analysis of pupils' work and in many of the lessons observed. For example, teachers used challenging scientific investigations to extend pupils' understanding of electricity. They used their good subject knowledge and a good range of questions very effectively to improve pupils' knowledge of the different variables in fair testing. A good proportion of pupils achieved very well and many attained above average levels. Good and often very good support by teaching assistants enables pupils with special educational needs and those from a traveller background to be included fully and to achieve well.
11. Teaching in other years is satisfactory overall, although it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Recent staff changes, owing to long-term sickness and some re-organisation to cover the absence of the headteacher, have led to some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations. Teachers share their planning successfully to provide similar learning activities in parallel mixed-age classes. However, they do not always match these activities to the range of different needs. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, too often the work was more suitable for the younger age range and did not ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, achieved as well as they could. Teachers do not use consistently the information they have from earlier assessments of pupils' work to ensure that the range of activities builds successfully on prior learning. For example, where more pupils completed the initial activity successfully, the follow-up activity was mainly a reinforcement of what they had already achieved rather than challenging them to apply and extend their skills and knowledge. This limited their achievement. The good support staff give effective help to pupils with special educational needs and pupils from a traveller background. This ensures that they are involved well in lessons, although not all activities are closely linked to their specific learning targets.
12. Most teachers are using individual targets in literacy and numeracy to focus on what pupils need to improve, although there is inconsistency in the usefulness of these targets. Some are very specific, identify key skills and are clearly based on the teacher's accurate assessment of the pupils' work. Others are very general and do not point out what the pupil specifically needs to improve. As a result, they do not help the pupils to raise the quality of their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They use praise and encouragement well to recognise pupils' efforts. Some identify where pupils have weaknesses and link this well to their improvement targets, although this is not consistent in each class. Too few teachers use constructive comments to indicate how pupils can raise the quality of their work, and then check later to see if pupils are improving these aspects. This does not help pupils to focus on points for improvement.
13. Most teachers manage their classes well to ensure that pupils remain attentive and sustain their concentration. They use a good range of behaviour control strategies to enable them to get pupils' attention quickly, although some teachers do not use these strategies consistently to sustain pupils' concentration. Most teachers maintain a good pace to lessons, although they do not always make it clear to pupils what they expect them to have achieved by the end. This

does not ensure that pupils of different abilities always achieve as well as they could. Teachers use homework effectively, particularly in English and mathematics, to support pupils' learning. This confirmed the views of most parents and pupils. Some teachers have weaknesses in their subject knowledge in music, art and design and ICT. On occasions, this limits the development of pupils' skills and knowledge, for example, in evaluating and extending their musical or sketching skills, and restricts the standards attained.

## The curriculum

Provision is **satisfactory**. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides children with a good start to their school life. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and meets all National Curriculum requirements. It is enriched by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage are good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The provision for music and art and design is unsatisfactory.
- The programme for personal, social and health education has not yet been fully implemented.
- The accommodation is good and provides good facilities for teaching all subjects.
- Limited library and ICT resources restrict the development of pupils' skills, although they are planned for improvement.

### Commentary

14. The school has maintained the standard of provision reported previously. The curriculum for the reception class continues to provide a good range of learning activities in each of the six required areas of learning. A very knowledgeable Foundation Stage leader manages the curriculum very well. She works in a close and effective partnership with teaching and support staff to plan the curriculum in detail to meet the children's learning needs. The area for children's outdoor play remains too small, although the school now has funds to implement the planned improvements.
15. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 remains satisfactory. It is extended through a sound range of other experiences. Good features include a good range of sporting activities and the Breakfast Club. However, there are few out-of-school activities to extend pupils' learning in music and the arts. The school has improved its curriculum time management and has fewer very long lessons. This has resulted in pupils maintaining a consistently positive and attentive approach to their work. The curriculum continues to be good for pupils with special educational needs. The school aims to ensure that all are included fully in all areas of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities and events, although some of the small numbers of pupils from a traveller background are not willing to become involved fully in aspects of physical education. Teachers, good quality support staff and the special educational needs co-ordinator work together well to enable pupils with special educational needs to be included successfully in curriculum activities and to track their progress closely.
16. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy has improved curriculum provision and management in these subjects, for example, in planning lessons for pupils in mixed-age classes. This has contributed well to improving standards. Staff changes have restricted the development in other subjects, especially music and art and design. Standards are now lower in these subjects than at the last inspection. The school no longer has the same level of staff subject knowledge and expertise to provide a broad and well-organised programme in these subjects. This has resulted in lower standards of attainment than at the last inspection. The school has included time for a weekly personal, social and health education lesson. Most teachers use two short 15 minute sessions. They use national guidance soundly to teach particular topics, although the school has not established an agreed programme of work. As a result, pupils' skills and knowledge are not developed consistently as they move from one year to the next.

17. The school provides good accommodation for learning. Teachers make good use of classroom space to provide a satisfactory range of learning activities. Facilities for physical education are good for pupils in Year 1 to Year 6 and they respond enthusiastically to the good range of curricular and extra-curricular sporting activities. The library area remains too small. The school has now got the funds and plans in place to refurbish a mobile classroom and provide a new and improved library. The ICT suite is used efficiently, although there are still too few computers in classrooms to extend pupils' skills.

### Care, guidance and support

Systems to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are **good**. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal and academic development are **good**. The involvement of pupils in the school's work and development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for addressing child protection issues do not currently meet statutory requirements.
- Good care and welfare systems are in place to ensure pupils are well supported during their time at school.
- Induction processes to the school and support for new pupils are well developed and this enables them to settle in quickly.
- Pupils are very confident that they have a trusting relationship with adults and that the school listens and consults with them effectively.

### Commentary

18. Teachers and support staff know their classes well and provide a caring and supportive environment for pupils. The overall provision for pupils' health, welfare and safety is good. There are clear systems in place to ensure pupils are well looked after if they are ill or have minor accidents. Good links have been established with outside agencies, such as the traveller support teacher and the educational psychologist, to meet the needs of individual pupils. Child protection arrangements, however, are currently not fully in place. The headteacher was the designated child protection representative and in her absence there is nobody else who is qualified for this role. This is being resolved in that the acting headteacher will be undertaking the new training programme shortly and will ensure all members of staff are suitably updated on the relevant procedures. Health and safety procedures are securely in place with risk assessments regularly undertaken. The governors take their responsibilities for health and safety issues conscientiously. The induction process into the school is well thought out and effectively implemented, particularly with the recent large intake of children into the reception class. Children happily settle into the reception class because of the sensitive way they are introduced to school. The transition arrangement for older pupils ensures that progress to the next stage of education is as smooth as possible.
19. Formal procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal and academic development and progress are not consistently implemented, and examples of good practice are not being shared across the school and all areas of learning. Where individual targets are set in English, mathematics and science, this helps pupils to be aware of how they are doing and contributes effectively to their learning, promoting good achievement. The setting of targets also makes a significant contribution to their personal and academic development by raising their confidence and self-esteem. However, these targets are not used consistently in each class.
20. Pupils are generally very happy and feel it is a very safe and secure school. Parents feel the school promotes equality in a consistent way and treats pupils fairly. Pupils are confident that they can turn to a member of staff if they have any concerns or issues and that these will be dealt with swiftly. Older pupils' talk about the benefits they have seen since the introduction of the peer mediation and buddy system and how they are helping to sort out difficulties amongst their fellow pupils. Although the school council has not been convened recently, pupils speak

positively about their successes in the past. They think they are well consulted, with their views taken into consideration.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and partner institutions is **satisfactory**. The links with the church and the local community are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The links with parents have been adversely affected by the current uncertainty over the continuing absence of the headteacher.
- Most parents have very positive views about the education that their children receive.
- The good links with the church and local community help promote pupils' learning.
- Parents offer valuable support to the school in class and through the Friends of St Margaret's School Association.

### Commentary

21. Following the lengthy absence of the headteacher, the current uncertainty is affecting the school's partnership with parents. Only 46 per cent of parents expressed the view in the inspection questionnaire that they feel that the school seeks their views. The inspection team recognises that the current uncertainty prompts such a reaction but that the leadership of the acting headteacher is doing much to improve the situation. The previous report spoke of a number of parental concerns, many of which have been addressed in the intervening period. Teachers are working hard to maintain parental links and promote their involvement in their child's education. During conversations with parents, some expressed very 'passionate' views about the school and the education their children are receiving. They are proud of the school and very pleased that their children enjoy being there.
22. Information for parents is satisfactory. Regular newsletters help keep parents informed of forthcoming activities and events, whilst the homework diaries maintain day-to-day contact between school and home. Curriculum information is circulated to parents each term so they can help their children at home. Parents regularly attend church services, class assemblies and school productions, whilst information evenings, curriculum workshops and courses are also well supported. Parents are kept carefully informed about the progress of their child through regular consultation and review meetings. However, although the annual reports to parents clearly identify what their children have covered, they do not always evaluate how well they are doing or identify targets for improvement. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is very good. A significant number of parents are volunteering to listen to readers, helping out with different group activities in classes or supervising pupils on school trips. The school association is run by an enthusiastic group of parents who organise a large number of social and fund-raising activities each year. These raise substantial amounts of money, which help sponsor different activities or purchase additional resources for the school.
23. Links with the local community are good. Pupils take part in many local events and have very close contact with St Margaret's Church. Local businesses donate items for fund-raising activities. Pupils are benefiting from the close partnership arrangements with other schools and local colleges. The funding offered previously through the Education Action Zone supported staff training and inter-school sporting events with other primary and secondary schools. Family learning programmes run in conjunction with Basildon Adult Community College are well attended and help improve parental skills as well as involving them in their children's education.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The acting headteacher provides **good** leadership and the school is **well governed**. The leadership of other key staff is **satisfactory**. The school is managed **satisfactorily**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher has maintained a strong focus on improving standards in English, mathematics and science during the absence of the headteacher.
- The roles and contributions of senior managers and subject leaders are improving, but some roles are not developed sufficiently.
- Governors are active in the management of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The school has good financial procedures and uses its funds efficiently.
- Most staff are eager to improve their practice and attend professional training, though new and temporary staff are not always aware of the school's procedures.

### Commentary

24. Since the last inspection, the headteacher focused consistently and rigorously on raising attainment in English and mathematics. She established a regular programme of observations of lessons and actively involved literacy and numeracy consultants from the local education authority to work with subject leaders and other teachers. This helped teachers to improve their practice and raised their expectations of what pupils can do. Because of the headteacher's lengthy absence, many parents are not satisfied that the school is being well led and managed. However, inspectors found that the acting headteacher, with very good support from an advisory headteacher, provides good leadership for the work of the school. She continues to carry out an effective and systematic programme to monitor core subjects through lesson plans, lesson observations and a thorough analysis of teacher assessment information in English, mathematics and science. This tracks pupils' attainment from one year to the next and has helped teachers to raise achievement in most classes. From this information, the acting headteacher knows which teachers need additional support to improve their practice and pupil achievement. Sound programmes of staff development are in place. Newly qualified teachers are supported well. However, temporary cover staff are not always clear about the school's procedures, such as target-setting for individual pupils or using information about how well pupils are doing to pitch lessons at levels suited to individual abilities. Sound procedures for the performance management of staff are in place, but the annual review is at present delayed because of the absence of the headteacher. Nevertheless, since the introduction of performance management, staff training and development has increased considerably. All staff provide a caring environment in which all pupils are fully integrated into all activities.
25. The acting headteacher has established a climate in which all members of staff are valued. Staff and governors are properly involved in school improvement planning, with subject leaders drawing up action plans for their subject. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators receive good advice from consultants from the local education authority and provide effective subject leadership. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages this aspect of the school's provision well. She has established good procedures to monitor and review the progress made by these pupils, including most of the pupils with a traveller background, towards their clear learning targets. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators have recently taken on greater responsibility for pupil development and their areas of learning. Literacy, numeracy, science and Foundation Stage co-ordinators have good information from the monitoring processes of the headteacher and acting headteacher, but have had little time to monitor pupils' learning themselves. Nevertheless, standards of attainment are clearly rising, particularly towards the upper end of the school. Other subject leaders often have limited information on which to evaluate standards and focus sharply on weaknesses across the whole school. Although staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's main priorities for future action, they do not evaluate the success of planned developments rigorously enough to check on their

effectiveness. They does not check consistently on how the developments are supporting improvement. The roles and contributions of some senior managers and subject co-ordinators are not developed sufficiently. This does not allow them to monitor standards closely in their subjects across the school and evaluate the impact of teaching and action plan priorities.

26. Governors fulfil their duties well. They keep a close eye on attainment patterns. The governing body works closely with the staff and is effective in helping to shape the direction of the school's work. Governors have specific subject responsibilities and, until recently, visited the school on a well-planned programme of lesson observations, relating to the school's priorities for development. This has lapsed over the last half term because of the time spent on personnel matters during the headteacher's suspension. However, during this difficult time they supported staff very sensitively and at no time have pupils or the curriculum suffered. Governors have established good financial procedures and manage the school's funds efficiently. They are supported very well by the very good administration of the office manager who provides regular, detailed and up-to-date financial information to the finance committee. The current budget surplus results mainly from funds for an increased staffing allowance since the school has only recently changed to two intakes of children into the reception class. The surplus also includes additional funds that have been allocated for improvements to the library facilities and the outdoor provision for the reception class.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	707,721
Total expenditure	620,505
Expenditure per pupil	2,192

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	36,337
Balance carried forward to the next	87,215

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

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

27. Children enter school in September or in January. The present large class contains many children who will become 5 years old during the Summer Term. Most children's attainment on entry is average. About 25 per cent are below average in aspects of personal, social and emotional development. Staff are quickly getting to grips with settling in the large number of new admissions. Children are being well prepared for the learning that lies ahead, because the quality of teaching and leadership is consistently good in all areas of learning. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable about the curriculum and how young children learn, and she has deployed the staff to make best use of their expertise. Planning is good, including work for children of different abilities, and is shared with all staff so everyone is clear about their roles. The good partnership between staff is strength, so there is a warm, caring and positive ethos where children are well cared for. Children with special educational needs are supported well with understanding and skill. Assessment systems are securely established and used efficiently to track individual children's progress. In spite of staffing changes, standards have been securely maintained since the last inspection. The provision for outdoor play is yet to be resolved and is unsatisfactory, hampering aspects of children's physical development. The school has drawn up plans and secured funding to improve this in the near future.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

Provision is **good**.

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

- The positive ethos established by staff results in a happy, supportive environment.
- All staff regard children's personal, social and emotional development as crucial in enabling them to achieve well in the rest of the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

28. Children make rapid progress because of the consistent team approach in providing a well-ordered environment. Children know the routines and feel secure. The quality of teaching, together with the contribution of the support staff, promotes this area of learning very successfully, and it is planned well. The very many new children rely heavily in these early days on adults or older children, but already some are confident enough to take registers to the school office and help others who are less assured. Most children cope well with getting ready for physical education, and nearly all are confident in collecting their own lunchboxes and lining up sensibly. Behaviour is very good. Older children have very good attitudes and are developing a strong sense of responsibility towards the younger ones. They are well on course to exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year. Early indications are that the majority of the new admissions are on course to achieve their expected goals by the end of the year.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

Provision is **good** in speaking, listening and writing. It is **very good** in reading.

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

- All staff place a heavy emphasis on the development of children's communication skills.
- Regular opportunities are set aside for children to develop their reading skills.

## Commentary

29. Many opportunities are planned to promote children's listening skills throughout the day. They are required to listen to instructions so that they know what they are to do in their group work. Many informal occasions offer chances for children to chat with each other freely. Most are beginning to develop the conventions of conversation and learning to wait their turn, resisting the temptation to interrupt. In lessons, they listen politely to each other and contribute their views with increasing confidence. Older children and the more able children are making very rapid progress in developing their early reading skills because they receive short sessions that focus on the sounds of letters, and those contained in simple words such as 'net'. They take turns with their teacher in a fast-paced rhythmic game and concentrate hard. The level of their achievement is high because the work is challenging and the session is highly structured to drive learning forward step by step. Children are developing their writing skills very well in similarly focused sessions that are planned to match their needs. Assessment is frequent and manageable. For example, children's writing is assessed monthly and clear progress is indicated. The quality of teaching is very good. The more able children are well on course to exceed their expected goals by the end of the year. Early indications are that about 80 per cent are on course to achieve their learning goals. Children with special needs are making good progress working towards their goal.

## Mathematical development

The provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical activities make mathematics interesting and fun so children like what they do and make good progress.
- Good links with other areas of learning reinforce children's knowledge and understanding of number and shape.

## Commentary

30. The quality of teaching is good, with a good focus, enabling children to see mathematics as part of their daily activities. For instance, they find out how many children there are in class altogether by counting around a circle after registration. At break times, children make good use of their speaking and listening skills when in groups they compare their biscuits using vocabulary like *round*, *bigger*, *half*, and *square*. They count up to five confidently, and recognise that there are more boys than girls in their group. Older children regularly practise counting objects and show they have a secure grasp in recording their findings in drawings and using numerals. Regular assessment of their progress is recorded and new targets drawn up if required. Older children are making good progress and are well on course to exceed their expected learning goals by the end of the year. Early indications are that most of the others are on course to achieve their goals by the end of the reception year.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of activities is planned for children to learn about the world round them.
- The co-ordinator organises staff and timetabling well to enable children to use the school's computer suite.

## Commentary

31. This area of the curriculum is alive with interesting activities so that children have many opportunities to enjoy the wide world around them. They enjoy visits to a local farm and, in class, watch a video-recording of their trip to remind them of what they saw. The co-ordinator makes good use of the school's computer suite and children work there in groups, very well supported by assistants. Good links with literacy are made when many match the letters in their

names with those on the keyboard. Younger children depend heavily on adult support to match the letters correctly. They use the correct vocabulary confidently, such as *mouse*, *keyboard* and *screen*.

32. Festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, are celebrated in school and in the local church. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament, for example when listening to the story of Jonah and the whale. The quality of teaching is good so children are making good progress. The co-ordinator makes good use of incidental events to promote children's interest in the wider world, for example making the most of holiday photographs showing brightly coloured parrots. Most children are well on course to achieve their expected learning goals by the end of the year.

### **Creative development**

Provision for creative development is **good**.

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

- There is a good balance between direct teaching of skills and opportunities for children to learn through play.
- A wide range of activities enables children to express themselves in art, music and drama.

#### **Commentary**

33. Children regularly have experiences of paint, crayon and pencil, for instance, in drawing pictures about their weekend activities and self-portraits. They use their speaking and listening skills well as they describe their drawings in detail and listen carefully to others. Older children's drawing skills are developing accuracy and greater pencil control. There are good opportunities for imaginative play and dressing-up in the 'home corner', which is changed regularly to promote a range of different experiences such as shopping. Weekly music sessions introduce children to a variety of instruments such as the accordion. They investigate carefully which instruments make loud or soft sounds and how they are played. They learn a number of action songs and nursery rhymes and play a good selection of percussion instruments. Early indications are that most children are well on course to achieve their expected learning goals by the end of reception year.

### **Physical development**

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

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

- Good use is made of the school hall for regular physical education lessons.
- The development of independent outdoor play is hampered because the outdoor area is too small.

#### **Commentary**

34. Children improve their control skills well when using equipment like scissors, pencils, glue sticks and small building bricks. They show increasing dexterity. Most cope well with buttons and fastenings, although some of the new admissions rely on adults to help. Lessons in the hall enable children to extend their movements, for example to run, jump and dodge. Opportunities for spontaneous play outdoors are hampered because the outdoor area is too small and its surface is uneven. There are not enough large-wheeled toys. There are no opportunities for children to climb, balance and swing because of a lack of suitable fixed apparatus, although plans have been drawn up to develop three distinct outdoor play areas. Funding is available and work is due to begin when the weather allows. These will enable children to develop their independence, self-expression and self-confidence fully. In spite of the limited provision, most children are on course to achieve their learning goals by the end of the school year.

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

## ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 6 pupils attain standards that are above the national average.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment and teaching in writing were unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' achievement accelerates in Years 5 and 6 and is good.
- The quality of teaching has improved, through effective monitoring of lessons and teachers' plans.
- Teacher assistants provide good support for pupils who benefit from additional help.
- The subject co-ordinator has limited time to observe and monitor teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2.

### Commentary

35. Standards in English have risen because the school has had a strong focus on improvement in this subject since the last inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 to 4, with better achievement in Years 5 and 6. This is mainly because of more consistent high-quality teaching in upper junior classes where pupils are taught in groups (called 'sets') according to their ability in literacy from the February half-term. The school provides good support, by trained teaching assistants, in all classes for literacy. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and those from a traveller background make similar progress to their peers in class work and make good progress towards their learning targets. Teachers' lessons plans have improved since the last inspection and usually provide suitable learning activities for the full range of pupils' abilities in the class, based on good assessment procedures.
36. In the 2003 teacher assessments, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 who attained the expected level was broadly in line with the national average in reading but below average in writing. Pupils' ability varies from year to year, and inspection evidence shows that the current Year 2 pupils are attaining higher standards. They have average speaking, listening and writing skills and above average reading skills. Standards in Year 6 have improved significantly since 2001, when they were well below the national average. The 2003 tests at the end of Year 6 show above average standards in reading and writing. In the present Year 6, the number working at the higher level is average in reading, writing, speaking and listening, but the number working at the expected level is well above average. Nevertheless, pupils continue to use joined handwriting inconsistently and spelling is often incorrect. The school is responding well and currently preparing a new spelling policy. Pupils do not always use a wide range of vocabulary in their writing and speech.
37. A rigorous programme of monitoring is in place in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. There are regular observations of lessons and teachers' planning, and a thorough system of tracking pupils' attainment from year to year, to ensure that pupils continue to achieve at the expected rate. Consequently, the quality of teaching in school has improved. Whereas the teaching of writing was unsatisfactory in the last inspection report, all teaching is now satisfactory overall, with good teaching often evident in both infant and upper junior classes. Nevertheless, despite her hard work to draw together information from the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning and that of county advisory staff, the co-ordinator has recently had limited time to monitor teachers' practice herself. She works well with the county literacy consultant and raises relevant priorities for development in the subject. For instance, the consultant provided good whole-school professional development for group reading sessions at the beginning of the term and the development of speaking and writing is promoted in all subjects. This is helping to raise standards.

38. The school has introduced a good system of individual pupil targets that directly links to pupils' prior attainment for writing, although it is not used consistently in each class. Where it is used well, this increases pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. However, teachers do not use targets consistently across the school. Most do not refer to them frequently in lessons or in marking. This does not ensure that the system is being used effectively to raise standards. Pupils clearly enjoy English lessons and contribute well to oral sessions, although some pupils are not as productive as they could be in written work. Regular homework is set that links well with class-work.

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

39. Teachers have taken very positive steps to increase opportunities to develop skills in other subjects. Good accounts, instructions and creative writing were seen in religious education, history, design and technology and science. Texts about other times or cultures are built successfully into literacy lessons. For instance, Year 5 and 6 pupils read information about Aborigines and 'Transported Britons' for their discussion about 'opinions'. Good opportunities to speak and listen to each other are evident in most lessons, especially in personal, social and health education. Pupils use computers regularly for word-processing and to retrieve information from the Internet. Many Year 2 pupils used the thesaurus facility accurately to find new adjectives to describe a monster.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory** overall. It is good in Years 5 and 6.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching in Years 5 and 6 enables almost all pupils to attain the level expected for their age. More able Year 5 and 6 pupils are challenged well to attain well above average standards.
- Some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations, especially in Years 3 and 4, do not ensure that pupils make consistent progress in their learning.
- The leadership of the subject is good and provides a good focus on raising standards of attainment.
- Management procedures to monitor teaching and evaluate its impact on learning are not developed fully.
- Good use is made of ICT to promote pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding in Years 5 and 6, although teachers do not use it consistently in other years.
- Pupils are not required to apply their mathematical skills enough in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

40. Year 5 and 6 pupils achieve very well in mathematics. Good and often very good teaching in those years promotes well above average standards. An analysis of pupils' work confirms that the school is on target to maintain the well above average results achieved in the national tests for Year 6 pupils over the last two years. Almost all pupils are likely to attain the nationally expected Level 4 and the proportion of more able pupils likely to attain above this level is above average. The good use of Year 5 and 6 booster groups in mathematics during part of the spring term enables the teachers' very good subject knowledge to extend more able pupils very effectively. Teaching and support staff provide good support to pupils with special educational needs, including those from a traveller background. This enables them to achieve very well and most attain standards similar to those expected for their age. Teachers have consistently high expectations of Year 5 and 6 pupils' work and attitudes. They respond enthusiastically to challenging activities, are keen to succeed and achieve very well. As a result, standards in Year 6 have improved considerably since the last inspection.
41. Year 2 pupils attain average levels. This is similar to the last inspection and reflects the results of national tests for the three years up to 2002. The proportions of pupils attaining at the

expected level and the higher level are similar to the national average. Pupils achieve soundly overall. Those with special educational needs, including those from a traveller background, benefit from good support from teachers and support staff, and make good progress towards their learning targets. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, and often good. An analysis of pupils' work shows that teachers are successful in enabling almost all pupils to attain average levels but some do not challenge more able pupils consistently. They do not always require pupils to extend their skills and knowledge, for example, when more able pupils have a good grasp of the links between repeated addition and early multiplication facts. They are not challenged consistently to apply their knowledge and attain above average standards.

42. The quality of teaching is inconsistent in Years 3 and 4. It is satisfactory overall, although it varies from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the standard and the amount of work to be achieved. This results in some inconsistent progress in pupils' learning. Teachers do not use consistently the information on how well pupils are doing to match activities to learning needs, especially in their knowledge of numbers. They do not use on-going assessments, for example when developing multiplication and division skills, to ensure that activities reinforce then extend pupils' skills. This results in pupils not achieving as well as they should in some classes and in some lessons.
43. Teachers use computer programs effectively in Years 5 and 6 to reinforce and extend pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy these activities, both in lessons and in the Breakfast Club, and make good use of the self-assessment activities to target their areas of weakness. This improves pupils' ability and their confidence. Some teachers use ICT to consolidate pupils' number skills, although there was little evidence of teachers using it consistently to extend pupils' mathematical skills in other years.
44. The subject co-ordinator, working in an effective partnership with the acting headteacher, has provided good leadership, focused strongly on raising standards. They are using improved procedures to track how pupils are doing in mathematics and to analyse test results to target weaknesses. These give good leadership to teachers to direct the focus of their teaching. The co-ordinator and acting headteacher have observed some lessons, although they have not established procedures that evaluate how consistently teaching is promoting pupils' mathematical knowledge. Many teachers are using pupil targets soundly to identify areas for improvement, although staff changes and the number and range of targets do not ensure that these targets are used consistently in each class. Some teachers remind pupils regularly of their targets, both in lessons and when marking their work. However, in some other classes, pupils were unsure over what aspects of their work needed improving. This inconsistency does not ensure that teachers are always expecting enough of their pupils or focusing consistently on raising standards.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

45. There was some evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills to measure accurately in science and design and technology and record their results of a scientific investigation in a table. Teachers do not identify links with other subjects consistently in their planning. This does not ensure that pupils are required regularly to apply their mathematical skills and understanding and contribute to improved standards.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Teachers in Year 3 to 6 plan exciting activities to promote pupils' interest.
- Pupils enjoy science and demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour.
- Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils' speaking and listening skills.



- There is too little use of ICT to support work in science.
- The subject has not benefited from regular monitoring by the subject leader.

### **Commentary**

46. Year 2 pupils attain average standards. Year 6 pupils attain standards that are well above the national average. These standards represent good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in lessons, although their past work indicates that this has not always been the case, especially in the infants. Achievement accelerates in Years 5 and 6 because teachers push pupils' learning forward by creating a strong sense of purpose in the lesson, setting more challenging work, and expecting more in the given time.
47. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 to good in Years 3 and 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. All teaching provides good chances for pupils to discuss their predictions in pairs or groups. In satisfactory lessons, behaviour management strategies are not always secure enough. Pupils' concentration is not consistent so they do not produce enough work and tasks are not always complete. This is reflected in the scrutiny of past work. However, in the good or very good lessons, teachers make learning objectives clear, there is a strong sense of direction and teachers' expectations are demanding. Their planning includes different tasks to provide sufficient challenge. Consequently, pupils stay on task and persevere. Frequent reminders about time keep pupils on their toes. Teachers interact well, asking probing questions to check understanding. Good attention is given to pupils' presentation of work so that investigations are recorded neatly and systematically. Teachers check carefully on how well pupils are doing through questioning and listening in discussions. Whole-school formal assessment systems are good but they are not used consistently in all classes to inform teaching plans. This does not ensure that teaching improves weaknesses in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
48. The subject is soundly led and managed. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge but does not have a good understanding of standards in the infant classes. She has not had opportunities to evaluate standards through monitoring teaching and learning. She has analysed national test results to plug any apparent gaps in the curriculum, particularly at Years 3 to 6. Extra activities promote the profile of science. For instance, secondary pupils help establish the nature area and until recently an Investigators' Club ran after school. This has temporarily ceased because of staff illness. Resources are good and well organised. The nature area is a very good source of evidence, providing good opportunities for the development of pupils' wonder in the world around them. For instance, Year 3/4 pupils studying habitats are overawed by the fragility of newts, centipedes and water-beetles.
49. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make good use of their literacy skills, using terms such as circuit, fair test and variable confidently. They set out their written work logically. They also use their numeracy skills well when measuring and drawing diagrams. Pupils have been encouraged to record their own investigations accurately, although too few use information and communication technology to support their work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers make effective use of the ICT suite and national subject guidance so pupils' basic ICT skills develop well in all required aspects.
- Some teachers lack subject knowledge and confidence to ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to apply and extend these skills.
- There are too few computers in classrooms to allow pupils to use their ICT skills consistently for work in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

50. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards that meet nationally expected levels. Many achieve well in retrieving and analysing information, for example, when Year 5 and 6 pupils gain information for their geography projects. Standards are similar to those in the last inspection and pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. The school has improved some resources, such as video and digital cameras, and these are used increasingly by some teachers to extend pupils' skills. Lesson observations and discussions with pupils show that most teachers use the ICT suite consistently and effectively to teach basic skills. However, there are too few computers in classrooms, as reported previously. This restricts some pupils' progress in applying their newly learned skills, particularly those with no access to a computer at home. This has been identified as a priority in the school improvement plan, although recent leadership uncertainties have limited its development.
51. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good when teachers are confident in their knowledge of the key skills being taught or the programs they are using. Teachers use national subject guidance well to plan and develop pupils' ICT skills in all required aspects. This enables most pupils to achieve a satisfactory level of skill and knowledge. Teachers and support staff work closely together to support pupils with special educational needs and those from a traveller background. This helps them to achieve soundly in lessons. Most teachers use the inter-active whiteboard in the ICT suite effectively to demonstrate key skills and provide good follow-up activities. For example, most Year 1 and 2 pupils, including those with special educational needs, follow the teacher's demonstration well and know how to correct text by deleting accurately when they make a mistake. Some teachers use a whiteboard successfully in their classrooms to continue to extend pupils' skills. However, because of the limited number of computers and the lack of subject confidence of some teachers, pupils do not apply these basic skills enough in classrooms to ensure that they have acquired them securely. They have to spend time consolidating previously learned skills during their next lesson in the computer suite rather than moving quickly on to learning and applying a new skill. As a result, some pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.
52. The subject is soundly led and managed. The co-ordinator provides good guidance to other teachers to inform their teaching. He has led staff training on the use of some specific programs to support pupils' learning well. However, the recent high level of staff changes limited its impact on teaching and resulted in significant variations in teacher's subject knowledge and confidence. The co-ordinator has introduced more detailed procedures to assess pupils' ICT skills and knowledge. They were planned to be put in place last term, but aspects of their development were delayed by staff uncertainties. The lack of procedures to check on how well pupils are doing does not ensure that pupils' skills and knowledge are closely monitored so that they build well on prior learning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

53. An analysis of pupils' work and discussions with them shows that some teachers make good use of ICT to extend some pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge, especially in Years 5 and 6. They promote pupils' skills well for gathering and presenting information, for example, in using the Internet to support topic work in geography and science. Some teachers identify, in their planning, where they use ICT to support pupils' learning. However, this is not done consistently in each class. There is considerable variation between classes in the range and frequency of opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and knowledge to support work in other subjects. This results in inconsistencies in pupils' achievements.

## **HUMANITIES**

Two lessons were seen in history and two in geography. However, both of the geography lessons were seen in junior classes, so no evaluation can be made of teaching in infant classes. Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' previous work in both subjects, spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils and looked at teachers' planning.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and standards of attainment have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now satisfactory.
- Assessment is underdeveloped, which limits the subject co-ordinator's knowledge of pupils' attainment and progress across the school.
- Pupils extend their literacy skills well in the subject.

### Commentary

54. In the last inspection report, standards were judged to be well below the expected level across the school and teaching was unsatisfactory. Since then, the school has developed the scheme of work well, taking into account national guidance, and provided more teaching time for the subject in junior classes. This, together with an improvement in teaching, has led to improved standards. Pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with those expected in Year 2 and 6. In lessons, pupils demonstrate interest, enthusiasm and a desire to find out more about particular topics and this helps them to achieve soundly. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from a traveller background, are supported well by teaching assistants and, as a consequence, their achievement is also satisfactory. There are good links with literacy, as pupils' ability is taken into account in the support and challenge given for written work. Likewise, aspects of history are a focus of some literacy lessons, developing such skills as note-taking and writing in the first-person, for example, as if Years 3 and 4 pupils were Romans fighting the Celts. The subject contributes satisfactorily to pupils' cultural development, with visits to Plotlands, Cressing Temple and Kentwell Hall.
55. It was not possible to interview the co-ordinator during the inspection, but analysis of the subject leader's file indicates that there have been few occasions for monitoring teaching and learning in the subject and limited time for him to carry out his role. Nevertheless, the headteacher and acting headteacher have monitored class and year group planning satisfactorily to ensure the subject is taught soundly. Although teachers evaluate lesson plans and pupils' work is usually marked, there are no formal systems for assessing how well individual pupils are doing in the subject. Without this, it is difficult to monitor their attainment and how well they are achieving.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning has been improved.
- The co-ordinator has recently been appointed and has had little time to develop her understanding of the subject's strengths and weaknesses.

### Commentary.

56. The subject co-ordinator has had responsibility for this subject for eight weeks. With the limited time available to her, she improved resources well to ensure that teachers can teach the topics effectively this term. She plans to carry out a similar task for subsequent terms. Her sound action plan for the development of the subject includes the intention to scrutinise pupils' work and teachers' planning. At present she only has an informal overview of the subject. However, the acting headteacher has improved the curriculum of the subject through a two-year rolling programme suited to mixed-age classes. This is satisfactorily based on national guidance. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore satisfactory.

57. Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected in Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve satisfactorily in infant and junior classes. In pupils' recorded work, it is evident that support or extension activities relate closely to their ability in literacy, particularly in infant classes. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of teachers' marking and there are no arrangements to assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of geography. This limits pupils' progress.
58. Teaching is satisfactory and promotes good links to other subjects. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 class, pupils used mapping skills successfully to locate towns and villages in Essex with Anglo-Saxon settlement names. Pupils in Year 6 spoke enthusiastically about personal research of particular rivers and mountains, when they make good use of ICT to get their information. In a satisfactory lesson, pupils from Years 5 and 6 carried out observations and surveys in nearby Pitsea, but at present there are too few opportunities for fieldwork in the subject. This restricts the development of pupils' skills.

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

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain standards that are below nationally expected levels.
- Teachers do not build pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding consistently on prior learning.
- Weaknesses in some teachers' subject knowledge and in aspects of subject management do not ensure that pupils' skills are developed consistently in each class.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to study the work, styles and cultures of other artists.

#### **Commentary**

59. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are below nationally expected levels and lower than those at the last inspection. Staff changes since the last inspection have resulted in a loss of specialist expertise and some teachers have weaknesses in their subject knowledge.
60. There was little evidence of work on display, in sketchbooks or from talking with pupils to show that artistic skills and knowledge are developed effectively from one year to the next. There were some examples in lessons of pupils attaining standards similar to those expected for their age. For example, Year 2 pupils drew detailed pencil portraits and made effective use of shading techniques to highlight particular features. However, these skills are not built on successfully as pupils move from one year to the next. It is a significant weakness that sketchbooks are not used well enough to extend pupils' skills. Examples were seen where the sketching skills of older pupils were of a lower standard than those they had achieved earlier in the school. Nevertheless, some teachers use sketchbooks systematically to encourage pupils to develop design ideas and practise drawing skills before applying them in their work. This resulted in a higher standard of completed work, for example, when Year 3 and 4 pupils developed their work on Surrealism. However, other teachers do not use their sketchbooks to encourage pupils to develop their initial ideas or improve their techniques before applying them to their final work. This results in unsatisfactory achievement with very little good quality work evident.
61. Teaching was satisfactory overall in the lessons observed. It was good in one lesson but unsatisfactory in another. Where teachers use resources well to catch pupils' interest, they use follow-up questions effectively to focus pupils' attention on key features and improve their understanding of what is required. This enables all pupils to settle to the activity quickly, for example when Year 2 pupils made good use of a self-portrait of Van Gogh to gain an understanding of how to draw facial features. However, where teachers have uncertainties in their subject knowledge, they do not match activities to pupils' learning needs. This results in

pupils losing concentration and less work being achieved. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the colouring activity did not require pupils to develop their ideas or extend their skills. Few sustained their interest. This led to their attention wandering off-task and little work being achieved. An analysis of teaching plans and discussions with pupils show that they use a sound range of materials to develop their skills in art and design, including fabrics and clay. Some pupils know of the work of some famous artists, such as Van Gogh, although few could recall key features of their work or their lives.

62. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory overall. The co-ordinator supports staff well by providing a sound range of resources and ideas. However, procedures to assess how well pupils are doing and to monitor how teachers are developing pupils' skills, for example, through evaluating sketchbooks, are not established. This does not enable the subject co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate standards and check that pupils' skills are being developed effectively.

## **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory** in Years 1 and 2 and **satisfactory** in Years 3 to 6.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good in Years 5 and 6.
- Infant pupils are not making sufficient progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The subject co-ordinator has not had any time to monitor the quality of teaching and evaluate its impact on learning.

### **Commentary**

63. Standards in Years 3 to 6 have been maintained since the last inspection. This judgement was confirmed by lesson observation, together with scrutiny of pupils' work. However, although standards in lessons observed in infant classes are satisfactory, the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that standards over time have fallen and are now unsatisfactory.
64. The quality of teaching in Year 6 is very high with clear objectives, a strong sense of purpose, and explanations that confirm pupils' understanding. Pupils use tools safely and make good use of their literacy and numeracy skills in planning and recording their work. For example, they use the terms *cam*, *followers* and *axles* confidently and measure in centimetres accurately. Teaching in infant classes varies between good and satisfactory. When lessons are satisfactory, initial discussions are too laboured, testing pupils' powers of concentration, and reducing the amount of time they have to spend on their tasks. Nevertheless, teachers ensure that all pupils are included fully, some with support. Pupils work hard once started, making satisfactory progress in the time available, but the scrutiny of their past work shows that pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principles of design and technology are weak. They draw pictures of toys but very few pupils complete their work. Only a few use their literacy skills to write a list of comparisons between old and new toys, or label or describe the differences they notice. Links with numeracy are also being missed. Teachers do not use ICT well to support work in design and technology.
65. The leadership of the subject is sound overall, although it has been affected by recent changes in staffing so that there has not been time to monitor standards. The co-ordinator has established a good file, full of interesting ideas for her colleagues, and an action plan indicates how she would like to develop her subject further in the year ahead. Systems to assess and record how well pupils are doing are unsatisfactory. They do not help teachers to plan activities that build effectively on prior learning.

## Music

Provision for music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The specialist teaching has been discontinued and this has resulted in lower standards.
- The new co-ordinator has other heavy responsibilities in the school and has little time to focus on raising standards.

### Commentary

66. Standards in music have fallen since the time of the last inspection and are now below national expectations in Year 2 and Year 6. Previously the school employed a specialist music teacher but, due to budget constraints, this arrangement has ceased. This change in staffing has seriously affected standards. There has been no specialist training for teachers to improve their knowledge and understanding of music. Consequently, teachers' knowledge and expertise are not entirely secure so their teaching lacks confidence. The present curriculum programme is not providing teachers with sufficient support to plan their lessons confidently.
67. In the few lessons observed during the inspection, the quality ranged from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. Teachers maintain good relationships with pupils and use equipment such as CD players competently. They are encouraging and show appreciation of pupils' efforts. Occasionally pupils' behaviour lapses and they lose concentration when the teacher does not ensure that they are all involved in an activity. Singing in assemblies is satisfactory. Pupils hold the line of the tune well as they follow a taped accompaniment but little attention is paid to their posture, breathing or enunciation. In line with the school's focus on educational inclusion, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from a traveller background, are included fully in music lessons.
68. Resources are good and the school has a very good supply of electronic keyboards to aid composition, although these are under-used at present. Opportunities are lost to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of music from other times and cultures. For example, music is sometimes played in assemblies, but no information is provided about what it is, its composer or when it was written.
69. The subject leadership is currently unsatisfactory. The new co-ordinator has had no time to work alongside colleagues to provide the level of support they need. The school has already identified music as a priority for development in the school improvement plan.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain above nationally expected standards in gymnastics and swimming.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and are supported well by specialist staff from the feeder secondary school.
- Most pupils have very positive and enthusiastic attitudes to physical education.
- Pupils' skills are extended effectively by a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities.
- The school has good facilities and resources.

### Commentary

70. Pupils attain standards throughout the school that are above nationally expected levels, especially in gymnastics and swimming. Pupils are keen, work hard and achieve well. The school has successfully maintained the good standards of the last inspection.

71. Pupils develop their gymnastics skills very well as a result of good and often very good teaching. Teachers plan lessons in detail to build pupils' skills successfully. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to encourage pupils to have a positive approach to their work and seek to achieve a high standard of performance. For example, a very good demonstration by the teacher encouraged pupils in Years 3 and 4 to improve the quality of their gymnastic sequences. She encouraged pupils to work together well in pairs to evaluate each other's performance. They helped each other to recognise what they had done well and what they could improve. This led to high standards being achieved as the teacher used her expertise to point out ways in which a particular gymnastic movement could be improved. Teachers use questions very effectively, such as, 'How can you make that straighter?' to focus pupils' attention on the quality of their work. They challenge more able pupils effectively to extend their skills and attain a very high standard of performance. Teachers maintain a brisk pace to lessons and ensure that pupils make the most of the time to develop their skills. For example, a teacher insisted that Year 2 pupils did not queue for the apparatus but used the surrounding area of floor to develop their sequence before moving on to the equipment. This resulted in pupils achieving a good range of movements at different speeds and levels.
72. Discussions with pupils show that they clearly enjoy physical activities. Many attend the extra-curricular activities, such as football, rugby, dance and mini-tennis, and this extends their skills well. Good links with local sporting organisations extend the range of activities successfully, for example, karate. Pupils were proud to talk about the many swimming certificates they had gained. They enjoy their swimming sessions and benefited from the good teaching of the swimming instructor.
73. Physical education is led and managed soundly. The co-ordinator has established good links with the Sport England support teacher from The Deanes Secondary School. These links have improved the knowledge and skills of some teachers who were less confident in developing pupils' physical skills. This has contributed well to pupils' achievement. The school makes good use of assessments in swimming to track progress. Procedures to assess how well pupils are doing in other physical activities are not established. This does not always ensure that teachers build pupils' skills successfully, especially those of below average ability and those who are not always involved fully in physical activities, for example, some pupils from a traveller background. This limits their achievement. The school has a large and secure playing field, a large hard-surface area and a good sized hall. It has good resources for all activities. These are used successfully to plan a good range of activities that grasps pupils' interest and attention and encourages them to attain a high standard of performance.

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

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss issues of concern, though sessions are too short.
- The school does not have agreed guidelines to inform teachers in their planning.
- The school's strong Christian ethos promotes pupils' personal development well and enhances their understanding of good citizenship.

### **Commentary**

74. Only one lesson was observed in this area of the school's work. Further evidence was gained from discussions with staff and pupils and an analysis of teaching plans. The school promotes a satisfactory approach to aspects of citizenship in assemblies, through personal, social and health education lessons and through some other subjects to help pupils understand that they are members of the school and wider communities. The school has timetabled a half an hour each week for each class for a personal, social and health education lesson. There is no agreed programme of work for teachers to follow, although most use national guidance effectively to guide their teaching plans. The school has identified the need for an agreed

programme of work as a priority in its development plan. Most teachers split their teaching time into two 15 minute lessons. Although this provides some time for pupils to express their views on issues that affect them and their friends, it often results in too little time being left for a detailed discussion. This limits pupils' contribution to, and understanding of, some of the social issues discussed.

75. The school has effective links with local schools, community organisations and Basildon Council and they contribute well to pupils' personal and social development, for example, through running sessions on fire prevention, drugs awareness and healthy lifestyles. The school's strong Christian ethos promotes a caring, supportive approach. The range of responsibilities taken on by pupils, including school council representatives, peer mediators and prefects, increases their understanding of the needs of others and the importance of their contribution to a harmonious community. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate a broad range of multi-cultural beliefs and traditions are not developed enough.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the acting 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).*

