

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tillingham

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115122

Headteacher: Mrs Hilary Dieu De Bellefontaine

Lead inspector: Mr Fred Riches

Dates of inspection: 17th – 19th November 2003

Inspection number: 257884

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	126

School address:	The Street Tillingham Essex
-----------------	-----------------------------------

Postcode:	CM0 7TJ
-----------	---------

Telephone number:	(01621) 779 263
Fax number:	(01621) 778 612

Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Philip Merriam

Date of previous inspection:	6 th July 1998
------------------------------	---------------------------

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas Primary School is Church of England controlled. It takes boys and girls from age five to 11. Pupils come from Tillingham and neighbouring villages. There are currently 126 pupils on roll, with an even balance of boys and girls. There are five full-time children in the Reception Year. The socio-economic background of pupils is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Children's attainment on entry to the school is average. The pupil turnover is low. All pupils are of white UK heritage and have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school won a Schools Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23235	Fred Riches	Lead inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, citizenship, design and technology, music, religious education, personal, social and health education
14756	John Lovell	Lay inspector	
24022	Julia Lawson	Team inspector	English, art and design, geography, history, physical education, Foundation Stage, special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Bristol
BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 9
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14 - 15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	16 - 28
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school provides a sound education for its pupils. Standards are average overall. Pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily as a result of satisfactory teaching, supported by sound leadership and management. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in science, especially the more able, to reach good standards by age 11.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics.
- The school offers a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum with a very good range of additional activities, effective community and home-school links and good use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in a range of contexts.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good elements, but a few aspects need attention.
- Music is a strength of the school, especially singing and additional opportunities to make music.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and assistants give good support.
- Good care, guidance and provision for pupils' moral and social development stimulate positive attitudes among pupils and help create a community ethos; teachers know their pupils well.
- The school does not do enough to promote pupils' awareness of race and culture.
- Independent activities for reception children are not always sufficiently structured.
- Very good improvements to accommodation, grounds and resources since the last inspection.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. In the main it has addressed the key issues effectively. The pupils' achievement in history, geography and ICT and assessment in English, mathematics and science have improved. Standards have varied year on year, as is common in small schools. Some aspects of teaching are not as strong as they were, but steps taken by the headteacher and governors to improve planning, ICT resources and the environment have greatly improved these aspects of the school's provision.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress. Almost all reach the goals expected by the end of the year in all six areas of learning. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. In Year 6 tests standards were above average in 2001 and 2002 in English and mathematics, but well below in 2003, as they were in 2000. As in most small schools, fluctuations in annual results are mainly to do with the nature of the year group. Year 2 results have improved over recent years in English and remained average in science. They have been consistently low in mathematics. Current standards in Year 2 are average in all aspects of English and science. Standards in Year 6 are average in English, but above average in science, due to the very good emphasis on investigative work. Standards in mathematics throughout the school are below average. This is because the school puts insufficient focus on ensuring pupils understand and explain their mathematical thinking. Standards in science have improved over recent years, with higher attainers doing especially well.

Pupils show largely positive personal qualities as a result of the school's good provision for their spiritual, moral and social development and sound cultural development. Pupils care for each other and respect each other's views. Older pupils readily accept responsibility and show good initiative. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good, owing to the positive example set by staff. However, the school does not give enough attention to raising pupils' awareness of issues to do with race and culture. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. It offers a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum for all pupils that is enriched effectively by visits and additional activities. Reception activities are not always sufficiently structured to promote successful learning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and in each key stage. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, learn satisfactorily except in mathematics, where teaching does not challenge them sufficiently to develop mental recall and explain their calculation strategies. Some teaching strategies, including deployment of support staff, use of resources and sharing lesson aims with pupils, are consistently effective and adult-pupil relationships are good. Other aspects of teaching, such as ensuring pupils know what they have achieved in lessons, giving them clear strategies for recording without the need to interrupt teachers, and setting clearly structured learning opportunities in Reception, are not consistently effective. Staff use assessment procedures well to track pupils' progress and set expectations in English, mathematics and science, but systems for checking how well pupils in the same year group but in different classes are doing are not tight enough. Assessment in other subjects is underdeveloped. The school provides good care, support and guidance for all pupils. Its partnership with parents is good. The positive aspects of provision contribute significantly to pupils' positive attitudes to school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy and governors have put considerable effort into improving planning, staff development and the school environment. This work has resulted in good morale among staff, a more welcoming school and a more pleasant and effective learning environment, including a well-appointed ICT suite. The focus on English, ICT and curriculum planning has been effective. Monitoring of mathematics and aspects of teaching, such as class management, setting a clear structure for reception children to learn independently and the use of closing plenary sessions to review achievement, have been less effective. Subject co-ordination roles are developing well. Management systems and day-to-day administration are sound. Budget planning is satisfactory. The school works with other local schools and compares its performance with others well to achieve best value. Improvement planning does not always show clearly how pupils will benefit, however. Governance is good. Governors have clear procedures, visit regularly and know the school well. They both support and challenge effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils express very positive views about the school. Parents find staff approachable and fair. They feel well informed. In their questionnaire replies they said that the school has good arrangements for pupils settling in and offers a good range of additional activities. The inspection confirms these views. Pupils like being at school. They are positive about almost all aspects of school life, but a significant number feel that not all children behave well and that lessons are only 'sometimes' interesting and fun.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics by challenging pupils to explain their calculations and develop their mental and oral mathematical skills.
- Raise expectations by improving aspects of teaching that require attention.
- Raise awareness of the mixed cultural and racial nature of our society.

- Make sure the activities set for reception children to learn independently are matched to their needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement during their time at St Nicholas is **satisfactory**. This includes pupils of all abilities, both boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics throughout the school are below average.
- Standards in science are above average, with higher attainers doing particularly well in Years 3 to 6.
- Several pupils achieve well in music because of the additional opportunities provided.
- Pupils' achievement in ICT has improved and is now satisfactory.
- Pupils' achievement in history and geography has also improved and is now satisfactory.
- Pupils' spelling in Years 1 and 2 has improved and is now satisfactory.

Commentary

1. Results in national tests at ages seven and 11 have varied in recent years as is common in small primary schools. This reflects the balance of pupils with special educational needs or with particular gifts and talents in any one year. The table below shows the last three years' results for 11-year-olds. Two helpful pieces of information emerge from the analysis of trends for seven and 11-years-olds. Firstly, standards in mathematics at age seven have been lower than they should be for a number of years. Secondly, results in science at age 11 have improved, with more pupils year on year reaching the higher Level 5.
2. The school analyses pupils' progress annually in the three core subjects. Inspection findings confirm those of the school. Overall standards are satisfactory in speaking and listening, reading and writing at ages seven and 11. Pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily in English. The school has put effective programmes in place to improve spelling, which was a weakness at the last inspection. Pupils' reading is better than their writing, but the difference reflects the national picture. There have been no significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment in recent years, but in some year groups boys show less enthusiasm for writing. The school is seeking to address this.
3. Standards in mathematics throughout the school are below average. This is because the school puts insufficient focus on developing pupils' mental and oral skills and on ensuring pupils understand and explain their mathematical thinking. The school has addressed weaknesses in pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics, but this has not raised standards because pupils' numeracy skills remain weak. The continuing low standards at age seven stem from this lack of focus on mental and oral calculation alongside recording. The weakness is apparent in all year groups.
4. Science is the school's strongest subject. Many pupils reach above average standards by Year 6 as a result of good teaching and learning that focuses on pupils developing investigative skills in all aspects of science. The increasing success of higher attainers in recent years is clearly due to the well-planned and well-taught science curriculum in Years 3 to 6. All pupils aged seven reach the standard for their age as a result of sound teaching following the planned curriculum, but few are challenged to record their knowledge and understanding consistently enough to reach the higher Level 3.

5. Standards in music are good and pupils achieve well, especially those who show gifts and talents in this field and who attend additional activities, such as singing in the choir and learning to play instruments. Standards in all other National Curriculum subjects and in religious education are average at ages seven and 11, with pupils achieving satisfactorily throughout the school. Achievement is better than it was at the last inspection in history and geography, when it was unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6, and in ICT, when it was unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, often making good progress towards their individual learning targets. Most reach standards below those expected for their age, but achieve as well as they should. Pupils with particular gifts and talents are set challenging targets, so that teachers expect them to do well. They achieve particularly well in music and in science through Years 3 to 6. In other subjects they achieve satisfactorily, usually reaching the levels projected in English and mathematics at ages seven and 11. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment in any subject other than writing, as mentioned above.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.1 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.5 (28.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.5 (28.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils **behave well**, form **good relationships** with each other and staff and show **positive** attitudes to school and learning. Older pupils readily accept responsibilities and show good initiative. These positive personal qualities stem from the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory, but the school does not do enough to raise pupils' cultural and racial awareness. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The school gives insufficient attention to raising pupils' awareness of issues to do with race and culture.
- Older pupils readily accept responsibility and show good initiative.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are mainly good, but there are occasions when concentration is not as good as it needs to be for pupils to achieve well in lessons.
- Very good lunchtime arrangements promote responsible attitudes and positive relationships.
- Attendance is good.

Commentary

7. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good, maintaining standards found at the last inspection. Pupils show positive attitudes to their work, behave well and are willing to learn. Behaviour in class is good for the majority of pupils. The few who do not behave quite as well are supported by staff who understand their needs and work hard to reinforce the school's ethos and rules.
8. Children start school with satisfactory social skills and soon become confident to try new activities and follow the routines of the classroom. They are interested and eager to learn and have a good awareness of the teachers' expectations. Most pupils take good pride in their work and many take part in the broad range of additional activities provided. They are proud to

represent their school in local competitions and events, talking eagerly about the things they like doing best. Boys and girls play well together and are inclusive in their play. The newly appointed 'play co-ordinator' provides a range of activities that helps pupils share equipment and play co-operatively. No incidents of bullying were observed during the inspection. No pupils have been excluded during the past year. Parents say their children like school, behave well and are encouraged to work hard and do their best. Pupils are equally sure that they like school, but most admit that the behaviour of some is not as good as it should be.

9. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good and the atmosphere in the school is friendly and welcoming. Older pupils become increasingly aware of the feelings and needs of others and show tolerance and understanding for other pupils. This was particularly noticeable in paired reading where the best partners provide good support to one another by pointing to the text and helping each other read the words correctly. Pupils with special educational needs generally have the same attitudes and values as other pupils in the school, although a few older pupils do not respond as well when separated from their peers undertaking different tasks.
10. Pupils' personal development is good because of the school's good provision. Reception children learn to speak and perform in front of large audiences for assemblies, plays and concerts. Most pupils in all year groups work well with a partner, willingly share ideas, listen to each other's views and show respect for views different from their own. In Years 1 and 2 some pupils find it difficult to work independently and constantly seek the support of staff. Some older pupils also need support when working independently. Without it they lose concentration. The school has appropriate plans to develop pupils' self-motivation and help them to become more independent in their learning. Most older pupils are aware of their increased responsibility within the school. They know what is expected of them and take pride in their position within the school. They act as table servers during lunchtimes and ensure that their table is kept clean; they record the arrival of the bus pupils, checking to see if they require a bus to take them home. A residential visit for pupils in Year 6 provides a good opportunity for pupils to relate to one another and to work successfully together as part of a team. There are effective systems in place for seeking the views of pupils with regard to aspects of their school life but at present there are no opportunities for seeking the views of pupils in the decision making process of the school.
11. The school has improved its provision for pupils' cultural development since the last inspection by celebrating 'special days' and religious festivals. The pupils celebrate 'Commonwealth Day', where each class learns about a different country and they plan for a 'Cultural Diversity Week' and invite visitors to share their experiences of other cultures. Provision for this aspect is satisfactory overall as a result of these occasions and adherence to the Essex religious education syllabus. However, the school is not doing enough on a regular basis to raise pupils' awareness of issues to do with race and culture in multicultural British society.
12. Provision for spiritual development is good. This has improved since the previous inspection. The school has a strong Christian ethos in which every child is valued and prayer is an important part of daily life. There are good opportunities for reflection in assemblies, which always conclude with a time to reflect and in PSHE lessons. There are very good relationships with the local vicar, who visits school regularly and has developed a special relationship with the staff, parents and pupils. Pupils use the church for special Christian celebrations and as part of their religious education studies. During acts of collective worship and assemblies, pupils willingly contribute their ideas and thoughts and they respond to stories with moral issues. Pupils understand the importance of being quiet and calm during these times and are supported by well-chosen music, which instils the appropriate mood.
13. Pupils come to school willingly and are punctual. Attendance is above the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **satisfactory** education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching includes some strengths and some weaknesses. There is a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum for Years 1 to 6. The curriculum for reception children is satisfactory. Staff provide good care, support and guidance for all pupils. The school's partnership with parents is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory overall. It is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but needs development in other subjects and to check pupils' progress where a year group is split between two classes.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in science and music.
- Routine sharing of learning objectives with pupils in all lessons.
- Not enough focus on achievement when rounding off the lesson to ensure pupils know what they have learned and how well they have done.
- Not enough opportunities for pupils to explain their mathematical understanding.
- Inconsistency in the use of strategies to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 and those with special educational needs record independently.
- Foundation Stage activities are not always sufficiently structured to ensure purposeful learning.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and contribute positively to pupils' learning.
- Relationships and class control are good in almost all lessons observed, but in a small number of lessons behaviour management needs attention.
- The use of pupils' exercise books for recording, marking and assessment is not consistent.
- Assessment is good for English, mathematics and science, but needs development in other subjects and in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	8	16	2	0	0

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

- As the table shows, teaching is satisfactory overall, with a number of strong features, but also some areas needing attention. Teaching is satisfactory in each key stage, including the Foundation Stage. Although mainly satisfactory and almost a third of which is good, teaching quality is not as strong as at the previous inspection, when a higher proportion of good teaching resulted in teaching being judged good overall.

15. The direct teaching of the class or of small groups in the youngest class focuses effectively on pupils' needs, with tasks well matched to children's abilities and teaching assistance well deployed. As a result, pupils develop early communication, language and literacy skills successfully and their personal development is promoted well in these contexts. An area for development is the use of activities, sometimes provided by the teacher and sometimes chosen by the children. Occasionally these are insufficiently structured, with the result that they keep the children occupied but not enough learning occurs.
16. Teaching in English is satisfactory with some good elements. There have been improvements in the teaching of reading and spelling since the last inspection. The school makes sound use of the National Literacy Strategy and has introduced an effective programme involving parents in assisting with early reading skills. Teachers make good use of homework throughout the school. The home-school logs used for children in the youngest class are particularly effective and set a model for others.
17. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory in the main, with good attention to the use and application of mathematics, but it contains two unsatisfactory elements, which result in pupils not achieving as well as they should. Firstly, brief mental and oral sessions at the start of numeracy lessons are not sharp enough. Secondly, teachers throughout the school fail to challenge pupils to explain their calculation methods, with the result that pupils' mental agility and understanding of numeracy does not develop as successfully as it should.
18. Science and music are well taught and teaching shows routine use of effective strategies in almost all lessons. All teachers share the main aims of the lesson at the outset in child-friendly language and in almost all lessons, routinely in literacy and numeracy, they organise groups effectively, matching tasks to pupils' ability. Where appropriate, as in some ICT and science lessons, teachers organise pupils in mixed ability pairings, challenging higher attainers to explain tasks and giving peer support to pupils with special educational needs. Teachers deploy assistants effectively, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons. In most lessons assistants are well briefed and give good, sometimes very good, support to pupils with special educational needs or to assigned ability groups. Occasionally, as in ICT, assistants require clearer briefing or more training.
19. A common shortcoming in the teaching is the lack of a purposeful review of achievement at the close of lessons. This lack of focus too often leaves the pupils unaware of what they have achieved or how well they have done. Also, the school has not agreed a consistent approach to recording in exercise books. Presentation is mainly satisfactory and higher attainers present their work well throughout all year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those who find writing difficult sometimes receive well-targeted support either from staff or through simplification of a task set. Occasionally, however, they are required to write as much as their peers and work is either unfinished or shows a struggle. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 sometimes take too much time on writing tasks, when they have no strategies for tackling spellings other than asking their teacher. Several sets of books show a clear picture of pupils learning through a series of lessons, but in others there are gaps and undated and unfinished work which reveal an inconsistent and unclear approach to recording work done and the recording of achievement. In the main, teachers manage the behaviour of challenging pupils or off-task chatter well, but in a small number of lessons, strategies used do not have sufficient impact and pupils' learning is unsatisfactory as a result.
20. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs includes many good aspects. All pupils are very well supported by individual education plans which are carefully drawn up by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the class teachers. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils make improvements and that they are fully involved within classroom activities. Pupils also benefit when they are withdrawn from class for teaching in literacy. There are good procedures for teaching assistants to record their ongoing assessments and to review the progress made by pupils in their care.

21. Teachers use assessment well to track pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and to predict how well they feel pupils should achieve by the end of each year. In this small school, teachers know their pupils very well and this helps inform both realistic and challenging target setting for every individual. New national assessment procedures for the Foundation Stage have been recently introduced and are being developed. The school is looking to develop manageable and effective assessment procedures in other subjects for Key Stages 1 and 2. It is aware that this is an area needing attention.

The curriculum

Provision for the curriculum is **good**. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Literacy, numeracy and ICT are planned well across the curriculum.
- Good range of extra-curricular provision.
- Improved library facilities and provision for ICT.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school benefits from a generous number of well-trained teaching assistants.
- The curriculum is enriched through visits and visitors.
- A good programme for PSHE.
- Improved long-term planning allows for curriculum continuity in mixed-age classes.
- Good outdoor provision.
- Improved lunchtime play activities for pupils.
- Some aspects of the school building are in need of repair.
- Insufficient use is made of the Foundation Stage outdoor play area.
- The teaching of sex and relationships education is in the process of review.

Commentary

22. The curriculum is good and allows pupils to experience a range of activities, which meet all statutory requirements. All subjects and religious education are well planned with suitable emphasis placed on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is a good balance of subjects and the school uses its time well to ensure that the whole curriculum is appropriately implemented. The curriculum is enriched by whole school events such as 'Cultural Diversity Week' and from celebrating Commonwealth Day.
23. The school has made good progress in its provision for ICT since the last inspection. The new ICT suite is well used and pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to practise and use these skills in other subjects. Parents comment positively on the improvements in ICT provision. They feel the school provides their children with a curriculum that prepares their children well for the next stage of their education. Several, however, voice their concern about the future, as choice is restricted and they see local difficulties in the provision for secondary education as a potential threat to their children's education.
24. The school is in the process of introducing a new curriculum plan for reception children. At present the curricular provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Activities sometimes lack sufficient direction and challenge and planned learning objectives are not always sufficiently well met. Current planning for reception children to learn independently is too fragmented. It does not provide enough opportunities for children to reinforce and extend their learning throughout the day. There are improved outdoor facilities for reception children since the last inspection, but these are not well utilised and do not make a significant contribution to the learning opportunities available.

25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling all pupils to access the full curriculum. Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting pupils both within the classroom and in withdrawal sessions for focused literacy sessions. Individual education plans are good, clearly identifying the learning targets for each pupil. Staff work hard to ensure that these targets are met. The special educational needs co-ordinator gives a good lead. Teaching assistants are suitably well trained and experienced and pupils make sound progress towards their targets.
26. The school provides a range of activities at lunchtimes and after school which enhance pupils achievements. For example, in football and netball pupils are becoming more competitive because there are opportunities to play against one another and to take part in local tournaments. The range of opportunities for pupils to become involved in community events contributes well to their personal development. The school makes good use of the local environment to support the curriculum. Year 6 pupils also benefit from a residential trip. The midday play assistant plans additional lunchtime playground activities very effectively. This allows for pupils to use a range of equipment and play organised games. The school also benefits from an outdoor swimming pool and wildlife garden, where pupils have opportunities for pond dipping. These facilities contribute positively to the good curriculum offered.
27. There is a good match of staff to the curriculum. Teaching staff are suitably qualified and there is a good balance of experienced and more recently qualified teachers. The school also benefits from a generous number of teaching support assistants who undertake clearly defined roles within the classroom and provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. The school is well resourced. The library has been relocated and has a good range of fiction and non-fiction books to support learning in all subjects. The accommodation is mainly satisfactory, but some exterior classroom walls are in need of repair and some pupils' toilets need replacing. There have been good improvements to the outdoor areas since the last inspection. There is now adequate space for pupils to play on both paved and grassed areas and the new amphitheatre and partly covered benches allow for quiet play.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know all pupils well; pupils are confident that they can seek and will receive support from adults working within the school.
- Child protection arrangements are good.
- Provision for health and safety is good.
- Provision for first aid is good.
- The school works effectively with external agencies.

Commentary

28. All staff know the pupils well and class teachers have good relationships with the pupils in their classes. Pupils' questionnaire replies give a very positive response when asked whether there is an adult they would go to if worried. The school has maintained the good quality of care and guidance described at the last inspection.
29. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are good. One member of staff is a trained first aider and all teaching staff have undertaken elements of basic first aid training as part of a life saving and resuscitation course. Provision for health and safety is good because safety is promoted well on a day-to-day basis. Equipment and appliances are regularly tested and equipment checked. The school has a good portfolio of risk assessments, covering external visits and activities within the school.

30. The school uses local area guidelines for child protection. The designated co-ordinator and all teaching and support staff have received training. Staff know what to do in the case of any concerns. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities.
31. The school involves pupils satisfactorily in its work and development through informal discussions in class and assemblies and particularly by involving older pupils in responsible tasks. It formally involved pupils in the inspection process by using the recommended questionnaire, but does not involve pupils routinely in corporate responsibility through a school council.
32. The SENCO, working where necessary with outside agencies, ensures good care and guidance for pupils with special educational needs. She meets regularly with teaching assistants to review and update the work undertaken by pupils in their care. Good arrangements are in place for parents and pupils to contribute to the review process and to identify targets for future development. The school follows the national Code of Practice guidance fully and has good procedures for identifying these pupils. The progress made by pupils is carefully monitored by the SENCO to ensure that all children are achieving as well as they can.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and very good links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parent /teacher consultations are well attended.
- Headteacher and class teachers are approachable.
- News provided about the life and work of the school is good.
- Several parents regularly provide good assistance in the school and many parents assist with trips and special activities.
- Parents provide good support for pupils' learning at home.
- A small but hardworking PTA raises funds to support the school effectively.
- The school's induction arrangements for pupils and parents are good.
- The home-school logs support pupils' learning and the home-school partnership very effectively.
- Community links are very good, especially with the church.
- Links with local schools support staff and pupils effectively.

Commentary

33. A high proportion of parents attend consultation evenings and staff arrange alternative times to accommodate those who cannot attend. Parents find the headteacher and class teachers very approachable. Informal access to teachers is good and this offers good opportunity to share information about pupils' progress and any other matter of concern. Annual reports are comprehensive, giving clear information about pupils' progress and standards reached in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. News about school life and events, together with general information, is provided regularly in newsletters and each term 'Tillingham 3Ts' provides excellent information and a celebration of pupils' work in a magazine format. The school brochure is well presented and informative and the governors' annual report to parents meets all statutory requirements. The school's induction arrangements for pupils entering the reception class and their parents includes the provision of a good booklet, which is particularly helpful in supporting early learning, providing practical suggestions for supporting children. The home-school logs for the youngest class include, alongside digital photographs and reading comments, very good, specific targets with practical suggestions to parents on supporting children in reaching those targets. The home-school logs are used

throughout the school, but the quality of the pattern set in the initial year is not maintained as arrangements for the exchange of home-school information for older pupils change.

34. A few parents regularly provide good assistance in the school and others assist with trips and special activities. Parents provide good support for their children's learning at home and a small but hardworking parent teacher association raises funds to support the school, providing sound and lighting equipment and playground equipment for example.
35. The school has a formal complaints procedure in place. In the last year there have been no formal complaints. Issues raised have been addressed appropriately and resolved informally.
36. The school has very good links with the community and other local schools. These include local area music festivals organised by the headteacher, the Maldon Christmas Choir competition, cluster sporting events, entertaining local senior citizens and very good links with the local church. The school also maintains the local archives, forging a strong link with Chelmsford County Records Office and the local newspaper, so that the archive can be used by the whole community. Transfer arrangements to secondary school are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff are **satisfactory**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has spearheaded effective initiatives to make the school more welcoming and effective by improving the school environment and facilities.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning has not been sufficiently well focused.
- The headteacher, deputy and core subject co-ordinators analyse test results thoroughly in order to track pupils' progress and focus efforts to raise achievement.
- Headteacher, deputy and subject co-ordinators have addressed key issues from the last inspection through improvements in curriculum planning to ensure that pupils build on knowledge, skills and understanding year by year.
- Governors play an active role in school development planning and have good procedures to monitor standards and provision.
- The headteacher has maintained the school's strong community involvement.
- Staff development initiatives have improved provision and raised standards in English but not in mathematics.
- The role of the deputy headteacher in relation to monitoring and performance management is underdeveloped.
- School development planning does not show clearly how the success of action will be measured against standards.
- The school has not given enough attention to developing race and cultural awareness among staff and pupils.

Commentary

37. The headteacher, together with the deputy and governors, have worked hard and successfully to improve curriculum planning for all subjects and assessment for English, mathematics and science. These aspects show good leadership and effective management. Pupils and parents are very pleased with the improvements to accommodation and grounds. These have transformed the appearance of the school since the previous inspection, giving the whole school environment a much more welcoming atmosphere and addressing the previously weak provision for ICT by the creation of a new suite. Other initiatives, such as the introduction of a play organiser and 'safer journeys to schools' have improved the already strong sense of a village school community, maintained since the previous inspection by the very good variety of

annual school, church and community events supported and sometimes organised by dedicated staff.

38. Both the headteacher and deputy have maintained positive staff morale, putting performance management procedures in place and developing a regular programme of staff and governor development, often in useful association with the local cluster of schools. But, while some aspects of staff development, including work on English and ICT, have been effective, other important aspects, including mathematics and the monitoring of teaching, have not had sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement and the teaching quality. The deputy's role has been developed effectively in subject leadership, staff training and pastoral work, but the performance management and monitoring roles are underdeveloped. Overall, leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory as a result of a balance between positive and less effective elements. This is not as strong a picture as at the previous inspection.
39. The management of the provision for children with special educational needs is good. The SENCO is well qualified and experienced in this area and provides effective leadership and support for staff. She has worked hard to continue the good provision for special needs identified in the previous inspection. There are suitable procedures for monitoring and reviewing the provision for special educational needs and for taking further action. The governor with responsibility for this area is effective in her role; she monitors the work of the SENCO and keeps herself regularly updated. Resources are well used and contribute to pupils' learning.
40. The governing body is effective in supporting and challenging the school. The chair and several governors know the school very well. They receive clear information from the headteacher and their committee procedures are efficient. The governors have good knowledge of the school and are involved effectively in the process of school development planning.
41. Financial constraints have proved a barrier to staff development aspirations for the current year, but the governing body has budgeted judiciously for the current year, aware that pupil numbers are set for a temporary slight fall as a large year group is replaced by a small one in 2004. The school's day-to-day finance and administration arrangements are satisfactory, although too much of the headteacher's time has been taken up with administrative work connected with initiatives. Office staff carry out their reception role very effectively.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	440,242	Balance from previous year	47,638
Total expenditure	380,781	Balance carried forward to the next	59,458
Expenditure per pupil	2,820.60		

The apparently large balance is explained by £27,000 (included in income but not in expenditure) set aside for the 'safer journeys to school' initiative. This brings the actual balance to a more realistic £32,458.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**.

Reception children are admitted into school in the term in which they are five. Only five reception children were present at the time of the inspection; they are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils.

Children start school with attainment that is mainly average in all areas of learning. All children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in their Reception Year. Most are on course to meet the early learning goals in each of the areas of learning. The school is in the process of introducing a new curriculum plan to ensure that both the needs of reception and Year 1 children are being met. This will improve the provision for reception children, who at present are not always sufficiently well challenged in their learning. In some lessons tasks lack purpose and structure and this is affecting how well children achieve. The school maintains good records of children's experiences through photographic evidence and this, together with a detailed home/school log, provides parents with very good information about their children's achievements. The teacher uses assessments well to identify individual targets, but the school does not create a clearly-defined picture of children's attainment in all areas of learning when they start school. There is currently no action plan identifying areas for improvement in the Foundation Stage and there are no procedures for monitoring and evaluating new initiatives.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good induction arrangements.
- Children choose their own tasks during afternoon activities and show confidence in their surroundings.
- Missed opportunities for children to select their own materials to fulfil a task.
- Opportunities for children to dress and undress for PE have improved their self-care skills.
- Children are willing to attempt new activities.
- Lunchtime procedures allow for children to develop their social skills with pupils from other classes.
- Little evidence to show children develop a respect for the cultures and beliefs of others.

Commentary

42. Children are familiar with the routines and come to school happily because there are very good procedures for induction in the term before they are admitted. Most children attend the playgroup which is located opposite the school. This allows for easy interaction and both the teacher and the pre-school children visit one another regularly.
43. Overall the teaching and learning are satisfactory in this area. Children have good opportunities to use their school environment, including the hall, ICT suite and library and show good confidence when playing outside. They benefit from shared reading with older pupils but there are no opportunities for children to share a snack and develop their social skills with the children in their class. There are also missed opportunities for planned opportunities to develop independence, to engage in planned co-operative play and to learn about the beliefs of others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory** overall; provision for reading is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-chosen books and stories enhance pupils' enjoyment of books.
- Children are well supported by the teaching assistant.
- Plenary sessions are used well to extend children's learning.
- Insufficient attention to the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Insufficient opportunities for children to write for a range of purposes.

Commentary

44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Children are making good progress in their reading and are benefiting from a new school initiative, which focuses on regular sessions for the teaching of reading skills. Children use these new skills well to attempt unknown words and as a result they are starting to read simple sentences independently. During class stories, children readily join in with the repetitive elements. They listen carefully and contribute to class discussions. Their speaking and listening skills are average. They speak clearly and are introduced to a range of vocabulary, which at times is a little complex for them. Children learn to speak to an audience for their class assembly and are confident when contributing in class, but would benefit from more planned opportunities for developing their speaking and listening skills, especially in mathematical development.
45. Children's writing shows that by the end of their Reception Year most children are meeting the early learning goals for this area. They show good control and appropriate orientation when practising their handwriting. However, there is little evidence to show children attempting their own writing for a range of purposes throughout the school day, to write labels for their models, lists in their role play, stories and instructions for example.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory** overall in 'numbers' and 'calculating'. There is not enough evidence to judge the provision in 'shape, space and measures'.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of number songs and rhymes.
- Tasks not always matched sufficiently to the wide range of ability in this small group.
- Good preparation and use of equipment, but insufficient challenge for children to talk about their understanding.

Commentary

46. With just one session of mathematical development observed, there is insufficient evidence to support robust judgements on standards and teaching in this area of learning. When the needs of reception children are being met, the teaching and learning of numeracy are satisfactory. Children benefit from teacher input and are able to recognise numbers and with support are beginning to find one less than ten. However, the different abilities within this small reception group are not always taken into account and some would benefit from being given a different task. When taught as part of a whole class, the needs of the reception children are not always taken into account and as a result they are unable to fully participate.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use made of the computer to support learning in other areas.
- A good range of visits and visitors enhances the curriculum.
- The teacher's time is not always effectively used to support and extend children's learning in this area.
- Tasks do not always match planned objectives, occasionally lacking structure and appropriate challenge.
- Little evidence of children developing awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others.

Commentary

47. Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in this area there are some unsatisfactory elements. Children are starting to use the class computers with good independence and they co-operate well, taking turns to operate the mouse. Printed work shows how children are developing mouse control by making patterns and dragging labels.
48. Children learn about their environment from their visits to the village. They look at gardens, visit a building site as a stimulus for role-play and use the school grounds to explore the natural world. They learn about their own culture through the very good links with the church.
49. When activities are not sufficiently well structured to bring about new learning and the teacher does not make sufficiently good use of her time, teaching is unsatisfactory. This finding reflects a weakness found at the last inspection. There has been insufficient progress in this area since then.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New outdoor area since the last inspection.
- Insufficient use is being made of the new outdoor area.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and children show a good sense of space when using the hall. In dance they confidently explore different ways to travel and are starting to co-operate with a partner by following each other's patterns. Whilst teaching builds on previous work, children were not motivated by the choice of music in the lesson observed and would have benefited in their learning from more guidance and support from the teacher and assistant.
51. The school has recently developed an outdoor area for reception children. Photographic evidence shows that some use was made of this area during the summer term for sand, water and large toys. During the inspection of the Reception class no use was made of this area. It is currently un-stimulating and not sufficiently well used to enhance children's physical development.
52. No judgements can be made about the teaching and learning when using tools and equipment as there was no provision for this during the inspection.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision for creative development is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities for children to use their senses to respond to stimuli.
- Good links with local visits and role-play.
- Unsatisfactory provision for exploring media and materials.

Commentary

53. A visit to a local building site has provided a good stimulus for imaginative play. Photographic evidence appears to show children enjoying a range of creative activities. However, during the inspection no children were engaged in role-play, with insufficient structure in the planned curriculum over the three days for children to develop their play. In one session observed, children enjoyed handling large pieces of ice in water and were supported well by the teaching assistant. Too much focus on identifying obscure polar animals detracted from the sensory experiences of handling ice, however, with opportunities to describe these experiences missed as a result. Creative tasks do not always meet the learning objectives planned. In such situations, no new learning takes place. Where there is insufficient teacher input and structure to develop the necessary skills for this area, teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. No judgement has been made on teaching and learning in music, as the inspection found insufficient evidence.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading are improving.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning.
- Subject leadership and management are good.
- Effective tracking systems allow for the monitoring of individual progress.
- Well-planned approaches for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum.
- Good support for children with special educational needs.
- Some aspects of teaching require improvement.
- Not all older pupils, especially boys and pupils with special educational needs, are sufficiently well stimulated in their writing.

Commentary

54. Standards in English have fluctuated since the last inspection. National test results at age seven in reading and writing were above average and above those of similar schools in 2002 and 2003. At age 11, they were above average in 2002, but well below in 2003. Standards in Year 6 in 2003 fell because of year group factors rather than any weakness in teaching. Standards are currently average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils begin Year 1 with the skills expected for their age in English and most achieve satisfactorily throughout their time in school. Teachers use assessment well to plan individual targets for further learning. These are then carefully monitored to ensure adequate progress is being made.
55. The school has made improvements in the provision of some aspects of English since the last inspection, in particular raising standards in spelling and reading over the past three years in

Year 2 and in English overall in two of those years in Year 6. The improvements result from successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and from a planned programme of training to improve teaching in all aspects of English. The subject co-ordinator has consistently monitored planning, teaching and pupils' work and has evaluated the impact of new initiatives and training on pupils' achievement.

56. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Trained teaching assistants with good understanding of pupils' needs, give them good support. Younger pupils respond well to additional classroom support and withdrawal teaching. Tasks for older pupils are not planned carefully enough to ensure that they continue to be motivated. Staff work hard to plan different tasks for higher attainers to ensure that their needs are met. Pupils use laptop computers, work collaboratively and sustain good interest in their work because they are sufficiently well challenged. In Years 1 and 2 plenary sessions are used effectively to stretch the more able pupils, but they now require more demanding tasks for recording their work.
57. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory. Most pupils speak confidently in a variety of contexts. Staff work hard to extend pupils' vocabulary by introducing and consistently using precise vocabulary and by providing regular opportunities for pupils to talk to one another in group settings. An annual speech competition is well supported, but pupils need more regular opportunities to extend speaking for a range of purposes.
58. Pupils in all classes enjoy reading. Younger pupils willingly join in with the repetitive elements of stories and poems. Older pupils eagerly share their books and show good interest and understanding of the story, its characters and the main elements. They respond to a range of texts such as poetry, biographies and play scripts, as well as fiction books. The school has worked hard to improve standards in reading and has introduced a number of initiatives to extend pupils' learning in this area. It has allocated additional time for reading in pairs; this is particularly effective when older pupils read with younger ones. The recent introduction of a structured programme in Years 1 and 2 is already having a positive impact. New library facilities and an improved range of fiction and non-fiction support learning in other areas of the curriculum. Good opportunities for pupils to undertake a range of reading activities at home have stimulated pupils' interest, with reading logs very well used by teachers and parents to support pupils' learning and record their progress.
59. The school has improved the teaching of spelling since the last inspection, introducing spelling logs to support pupils in their work. Whilst the school keeps this aspect of writing under review, pupils in Years 1 and 2 still lack confidence when attempting to spell unknown words and rely too much on adult support. Presentation of work is generally good and very good for higher attaining pupils. Older pupils generally produce fluent, joined and legible writing and punctuate their work accurately, but throughout the school there are examples of untidy and incomplete work for some pupils, which suggests that the recording task is not sufficiently well matched to their needs. In Year 6, pupils' writing shows writing across a range of genres but some writing tasks do not stimulate boys sufficiently well, resulting in reluctant writing. Pupils are, however, writing more often for different purposes, composing stories, play scripts, instructions and biographies and the school has identified this as an area for further development.
60. Although standards are average in English overall, pupils do not achieve as well in writing as they do in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not work with the level of independence expected. This is partly because work is not consistently matched to their needs and partly because structures to support writing tasks are not sufficiently well organised. In some lessons, older pupils do not sustain concentration sufficiently in order to complete their task. In others teachers miss opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own writing and that of their peers. This limits their awareness of their own and each other's achievement.
61. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Most teachers plan well for the wide spectrum of age and ability within their classes. The provision for homework is good and sometimes

very good, enabling pupils to use their research skills, practise spellings and punctuation, undertake comprehension tasks and complete book reviews. All work is valued and marking contributes well to pupils' learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Teachers plan well for the use of English in other subjects and as a result pupils make good use of their language and literacy skills. For example, in history they develop their reading skills by scanning texts to locate information and in geography they share their ideas and listen to those of others when discussing suitable settlements on their imaginary island. ICT is used well to support pupils' work in English. Pupils collaborate to write stories, edit their writing, explore font size, style and colour when writing persuasive text and reinforce their reading skills by completing simple programs.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient challenge for pupils to explain their understanding and methods of calculating.
- Insufficient pace and focus in mental and oral starter sessions.
- The lack of a school approach to recording mathematics leads to inconsistencies.
- Standards at age seven have been consistently lower than they should be over a number of years.
- Good analysis of test results to focus efforts for improvement, but not effecting improvement in numeracy.
- Good attention to staff development on the use and application of mathematics.

Commentary

63. Results of national tests at age 11 show no consistent pattern. They were well below average in 2000 and 2003 and above average in 2001 and 2002. Results at age seven have been lower than they should be for a number of years. Inspection findings show standards below average overall throughout the school. They are lower than at the previous inspection, when standards were above average at the end of three consecutive years of rising results.
64. The school's main strategy for addressing acknowledged weaknesses in the subject over the past four years has involved close analysis of results and considerable attention to staff training in teaching the use and application of mathematics. The co-ordinator's analysis shows some success from this strategy. The aspects of mathematics dealing with shape, space, measurement and data handling are also covered adequately, with each class following the pattern of the National Numeracy Strategy overall. However, the main weaknesses centre around pupils' weak numeracy skills. Teaching puts too little emphasis on developing pupils' mental and oral skills and on challenging pupils to explain their mental calculating strategies.
65. While pupils appear to show understanding in their recording of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division at appropriate levels of difficulty for their ages, the recorded calculations are often restricted to one method. Teachers throughout the school match practical and recording tasks to groups of differing ability, ensuring assistants are deployed to give support to pupils with special educational needs. However, during the inspection no teachers challenged pupils to explain their understanding to each other, in pairs, in groups or to the whole class. The daily routine brisk mental and oral sessions recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy lack zip. Teachers' expectations are not high enough in these and the sessions lack pace. End-of-lesson plenary sessions to ensure pupils recognise and explain what they have achieved are not as routine as they should be. Overall, teachers do

most of the mathematical thinking and pupils tend to be asked to give one-word answers. Expectations and challenge are too low.

66. A further area for development is the use of exercise books for recording. In Years 3 to 6, recording is regular and marking is consistent. Occasionally, it appears that pupils record more examples of one method of calculation than they need in order to consolidate their understanding. Few examples of mathematical investigations were seen. In Years 1 and 2, expectations of what pupils should record are not clear. It is difficult to track a sequence of teaching from pupils' books. While much successful early mathematical work is practical and oral, pupils' books do not show clearly enough what they have understood and pupils in Year 2 need more regular challenge to record their calculations.
67. The co-ordinator has worked conscientiously to analyse weaknesses, lead staff development and draw in local education authority support. Observation of teaching has focused mainly on the use and application of mathematics. Resources are good and the school is developing the use of ICT to support the subject. Monitoring of pupils' work in exercise books and of the teaching of numeracy has not been sharp enough, however.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. The school is developing the use of mathematics across the curriculum well in the context of its focus on using and applying mathematics. This is particularly successful in science in Years 3 to 6, where pupils show good ability to handle data. ICT programs are being used satisfactorily to support pupils' creation and understanding of graphs and charts. Both teachers and assistants need further training in the use of programs that set out to support pupils' mathematical thinking. Clear teaching instruction and focused mathematical conversation is essential to make effective use of the programs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good challenge for higher attainers in Years 3 to 6 results in these pupils achieving well.
- Very good focus on investigative and experimental work, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Good use of ICT to support learning and use of data in Years 3 to 6.
- Not enough challenge for higher attainers in Year 2.
- Inconsistent pattern of recording expectations in exercise books between different classes.

Commentary

69. Science is a strength of the school. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 and well throughout Years 3 to 6, with higher attainers doing particularly well. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Clear assessment procedures are in place. This shows good improvement since the last inspection.
70. The school's results in tests at age 11 have shown an increasing proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in each of the last three years. Inspection findings show that this success is a result of good teaching in Years 3 to 6, with a particular focus on experimental and investigative work alongside recording in a variety of scientific contexts.
71. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 also puts good emphasis on investigative work, but higher attainers are not required to record their findings sufficiently regularly. While much of the learning is rightly practical and oral, exercise books show too little for the current year. While higher attainers label carefully, their writing in other subjects shows that they could express their knowledge and understanding better in science. In the lesson observed in Years 1 and 2,

pupils collaborated and discussed well, showing pleasure as they connected circuits to light bulbs, but the final plenary session did not challenge pupils sufficiently to confirm their learning through clear explanation and demonstration.

72. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 shows good challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 show good recall of previous work and follow their teacher's example in using precise scientific terminology to explain their understanding of shadows. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make good use of ICT to ensure successful culmination of an experiment on insulation. Pupils in Year 6 are clearly used to setting up and recording experiments independently and show good skills as they collaborate, support each other in small groups and record as they plan. As in Key Stage 1, pupils' exercise books show an inconsistent picture. Some show a clear sequence of work. Others have gaps and unfinished pieces. For the most part, pupils present their work well and use precise scientific vocabulary well as they set the record of an investigation out in a logical way, showing good understanding in their summary of conclusions. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 all make good use of literacy skills, data handling and occasionally ICT in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good improvement in staff knowledge and confidence.
- Very good improvement in resources and their use.
- Some good collaboration by pairs of pupils, but occasionally some lack of focused effort.
- Some programs are not used to full effect because the teaching and learning focus is not made sufficiently clear.
- Technical problems cause frustration.
- Insufficient support for pupils with special educational needs on occasion.
- Teaching assistants give helpful support but need further training.

Commentary

73. The school has made considerable improvements in its provision for the subject since the last inspection, when resources were weak and staff confidence was low. The introduction of an ICT suite, together with training for all teachers in the use of the computers has led to more confident teaching. The improvements in provision have led to an improvement in pupils' achievement, which is now satisfactory. Standards at ages seven and 11 are broadly average. Pupils of all abilities collaborate well in the main, with higher attainers often honing their skills by pairing with those who are less proficient, in order to explain processes. Pupils of lower ability, including those with special educational needs, also benefit from this organisational planning, as they follow the one-to-one instructions of their partner or take turns in operating the mouse and keyboard.
74. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Pupils learn well when the lesson is clearly focused and planned, where expectations are clear and the teacher sets time limits for tasks, requiring pupils to work hard to complete the given tasks. In the good teaching seen, pupils saw clearly how the use of computers to enter and analyse data led to a more efficient completion of their scientific studies. They experienced success in completing the task within a given time and understood their results. Where teaching was less successful, pupils used the computers without applying their minds to the task. The teaching was not sufficiently clear or challenging to ensure that pupils tackled tasks urgently, with the result that only higher attainers used the program well and could explain what they were learning. Where teaching assistance or voluntary support was available, adults discussed with pairs of pupils what they were doing, but needed clearer briefing to bring the best out of the pupils. Where no additional adult

assistance was available, pupils with special needs occasionally lacked sufficient support to make adequate progress and lost interest.

75. The subject co-ordinator supports staff strongly through the provision of a well organised scheme of work, which details weekly use of the suite in a range of subjects and covers all aspects of the ICT curriculum. While the school has improved efficiency after initial teething troubles, teachers still experience technical hitches, which obstruct progress and cause frustration.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. Teachers use programs well in the main to develop ICT skills in many contexts in a range of subjects. The application of ICT is particularly successful in English, through word processing and the development of desktop publishing skills and in science, where data collected during experiments is logged and swiftly turned into various charts and graphs.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Provision in both history and geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject leadership.
- Good use made of residential trips and visits supports learning.
- Assessment procedures require developing.
- Recorded work is not always appropriate to the needs of all pupils.
- Provision has improved since the last inspection.
- Good teaching in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

77. One full lesson was observed and two were sampled. These, together with pupils' work, teachers' plans and discussions with co-ordinators show average standards in Years 2 and 6, with pupils achieving satisfactorily overall in Years 1 to 6. Humanities have been the focus for development in recent years and the history and geography co-ordinators have worked hard to address the issues raised in the last inspection. As a result there are good schemes of work which allow for the appropriate development of knowledge, skills and understanding in both subjects. The very good timetabling arrangements for the curriculum mean that geography skills are taught regularly throughout the year. As a result, standards in geography have improved since the last inspection in Years 3 to 6. In history standards have also improved in Years 3 to 6 since the last inspection because shared topics help staff to plan for good progression.
78. In **geography**, pupils in Year 2 identify human and physical features of their local environment and those in Year 6 make very good use of a residential visit to the Yorkshire Dales to explore a contrasting location. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory. However, too much emphasis is placed on pupils' written recordings, which often detracts from the development of geographical skills. In Years 3 to 6 teaching and learning are good. There are very good opportunities for pupils in Year 6 to learn from first hand experience about the features of a contrasting location. The papier-mâché island in the Year 4/5 class is a very good stimulus, which enhances pupils' learning. Teachers make good links with other subjects, for example, history, ICT and art and design.

79. In **history**, pupils in Years 3 to 6 research the lifestyle of ancient Greece, learn about Greek gods, experiment with the Greek alphabet and compare Athens and Sparta and the lives of the people who lived there. Work is very well planned to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills from year to year. There is insufficient evidence to judge teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 teaching and learning are good. Planning builds on well from previous learning. Teachers present a range of interesting learning opportunities, for example, research, sequencing events using a time line, and comparing maps to those of the present day and role-play. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum, in particular literacy, ICT and art. Educational visits provide opportunities for artefact handling and role-play and for teachers and pupils in the three oldest classes to work together.
80. The subject co-ordinators have a good understanding of the needs of their subjects and monitor standards through lesson observations, analysis of pupils' work and teachers' plans. There are good plans for the further development of these subjects, including the introduction of manageable assessment procedures.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good teaching and learning shown in occasionally well-focused pieces of writing.
- Higher attainers express their understanding well when challenged to use their imagination.
- Exercise books provide insufficient evidence of what pupils have covered and achieved.
- Recording tasks are sometimes well matched to pupils needs, but also sometimes too challenging for pupils with special educational needs.
- Visits and visitors.

Commentary

81. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in this subject as a result of a well-planned curriculum and sound teaching. Pupils' books show good achievement on occasion, especially among more able writers, who express their thoughts, views, accounts and descriptions well. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are similar to those found at the previous inspection, meeting agreed syllabus requirements.
82. Teaching in the lesson observed was satisfactory. The teacher engaged pupils in lively discussion following the expressive reading of a version of the Noah story. Pupils showed good ability to empathise with different people's viewpoints, from those people who mocked, to 'Mrs Noah' standing by her husband. When asked to express their views in writing, though tasks were different for pupils of different ability, several pupils found it difficult to settle and to get on successfully, as they had insufficient access to words they needed to spell.
83. This difficulty was apparent in the exercise books of those throughout the school who find writing difficult, particularly pupils with special educational needs. In Year 6, the teacher had overcome the difficulty by setting writing tasks carefully matched to pupils' abilities. In one context, a lower ability group used vocabulary in set questions to answer them directly, while higher attainers were challenged to write imaginatively in diary form from the writer's viewpoint. Higher attainers' written work throughout the school shows good ability to empathise and lively use of vocabulary. Teachers occasionally provide good writing support for pupils of lower ability, but sometimes their work remains unfinished, showing either lack of focus or too difficult a task.

84. The school follows the Essex agreed syllabus, which ensures good coverage of a range of religions. Teachers plan for pupils to learn 'about' religions and 'from' them. The current term's work showed little focus on religions other than Christianity, but this was due to the pattern of the syllabus. This meant, however, that the subject did not show the expected contribution to pupils' awareness of other races and cultures represented in British society.
85. The subject has a new co-ordinator. Gaps in exercise books reveal a need for the school to develop procedures to show how themes are covered when pupils do not record in written form. Planned links between religious education and the visual and performing arts to enliven the subject and broaden ways of expressing pupils' knowledge and understanding were not apparent in displays or discussions with pupils and staff. Links with the local church and particularly the vicar add considerably to pupils' knowledge and experience of Christianity. Displays showing information on other faiths do not currently include pupils' work. The school has not developed opportunities to visit or receive visitors from other religions. The inspection found little evidence of the use of ICT and artefacts, with the exception of a Torah scroll. Assessment also remains an area to be developed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Few lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology, music and PE. It is therefore not possible to make a firm judgement about provision. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to teachers about the work, spoke to pupils about what they had learned and looked at examples of past work.

Commentary

86. One lesson was observed in **art and design**. Displays and sketchbooks in Years 1 and 2 provided limited evidence to show the quality of teaching of different skills. Sketchbooks indicate that pupils have attempted to draw people in the style of Lowry and have explored colour and shape as a response to listening to music. There is insufficient evidence, however, to show pupils' progress in this area within the classroom and therefore it is not possible to judge whether the school has improved its teaching of art skills in these year groups since the last inspection. In the one lesson sampled in Year 6 the pupils achieved well because the teaching was good. The teacher used his knowledge of the subject to demonstrate skills and techniques and used ongoing observations to support and extend pupils' learning. Good planning built on pupils' previous experiences as a stimulus and pupils responded well by making good progress in their poster designs. They explored visual elements of colour, pattern, line and tone to enhance the quality of their work and made good use of their previous learning to develop their ideas.
87. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 make good links with other subjects. This is particularly evident in history, where pupils have studied Greek pottery, made observational drawings of artefacts and copied pictures from reference books. In Years 1 and 2 pupils design and make African masks as part of their Commonwealth Day celebrations, but overall there is little evidence to show pupils learning about the work of artists, craftspeople and designers from different cultures and times.
88. The school has made satisfactory progress in this subject since the last inspection. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with the curriculum well planned and resources available and accessible, but there is no monitoring of teaching and learning or assessment of pupils' achievement.
89. The inspection found insufficient evidence to make judgements on pupils' achievement or on teaching and learning in **design and technology**. No lessons were observed and few examples of finished work were seen. Provision is satisfactory, as each class follows a well-planned series of lessons to ensure the National Curriculum is followed. Pupils' books in Years 1 and 2 show labelled diagrams, with pupils listing materials to be used. Year 6 pupils'

books contain good examples of the design process and of pupils evaluating and refining their designs, including the use of precise scale drawings for pet cages. This work had included Internet research into the needs of the pets, such as lizards and hamsters.

90. **Music** is a strength of the school. The music curriculum is well planned and teaching and learning are good. Though it was not possible to judge standards in Years 2 and 6, it is clear that pupils of all abilities enjoy music and achieve well. The school has maintained the positive picture reported by the previous inspection.
91. The school offers a wealth of additional opportunities for pupils to develop their musical gifts and talents further through choir and recorder sessions and through individual tuition on a range of instruments. All pupils, but particularly those with musical talent, have plenty of opportunity to perform in school and at community events.
92. Singing is very good, not only within the well-trained choir, but also for the whole school. Pupils sing tunefully and expressively during collective worship. They show good diction and posture and breathe well to ensure good tone. Pupils use percussion instruments effectively in Years 3 and 4 to create patterns of sounds and silences. In Years 4 and 5 they listen well to a variety of musical styles, including opera, choral and jazz and express their views on these thoughtfully. Pupils' books from Years 1 and 2 show imaginative visual responses stimulated by their close listening to classical music. Pupils learn successfully because they catch their teachers' enthusiasm. Teachers show good subject knowledge and an imaginative approach. They use resources very well and through good pace and questioning keep pupils alert and involved.
93. The subject is well resourced and very well led. The curriculum is well planned and the use of music and singing in assemblies and class lessons contributes significantly to all pupils' spiritual and cultural development and to the community ethos of the school. The school makes a considerable contribution to annual village, church and area events through the enthusiasm, skill and commitment of the headteacher as music co-ordinator and the choir co-ordinator.
94. In **physical education** the subject co-ordinator has worked hard to improve provision since the last inspection by introducing a new scheme of work, using professional coaches to teach a range of games and by improving the resources. This support has had an impact on the quality of teaching and has helped pupils to become more competitive in sport. The school currently offers a wide range of sports, including cricket, tennis, basketball and football and older pupils compete in local tournaments in netball. In addition, the school makes appropriate use of its outdoor swimming pool and offers swimming to all pupils in the summer months.
95. Dance has been a recent focus for improvement and although only one lesson was observed in Year 1, reviews of lesson plans for Year 2 pupils indicate that they are achieving well in this area. They sequence movements that differ in speed, rhythm, direction and level and this builds on well from pupils' previous learning. Not all pupils achieve as well as they can in Year 1 because the music used restricts their range of movement too much and because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their performance. As a result, teaching is satisfactory.
96. In Years 3 to 6 only one lesson was observed. Standards in gymnastics are average in Year 6. Good teaching in the lesson used pupils well to demonstrate their work for others to comment upon; this was effective in improving their performance. The teacher's own knowledge and enthusiasm for PE resulted in pupils being well motivated, which had a good impact on their learning. Pupils display good attitudes to the subject. They respond well to instructions, willingly demonstrate their work and show pride in their efforts. Teachers plan well for PE and build on from pupils' previous knowledge.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

97. This subject was sampled so no overall judgement is made about provision. Weekly lessons give pupils opportunities to understand their own feelings and those of others and to consider social and moral dilemmas. Provision for sex and relationships education and for drug awareness is satisfactory. These areas are currently being developed. Some interesting recorded work in Year 2 shows pupils developing good understanding of fairness and the difference between right and wrong. In Year 6 pupils' writing shows clear interested and thoughtful responses to tasks associated with interpreting body language and the definition of terms used in the school aims.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	4
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).