

INSPECTION REPORT

SPRING MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Harwich

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114834

Headteacher: Ms L Gildea

Lead inspector: Nigel Power

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th November 2003

Inspection number: 260496

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	294
School address:	Pound Farm Drive Dovercourt Harwich Essex
Postcode:	CO12 4LB
Telephone number:	01255 504528
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Andy Schooler
Date of previous inspection:	27 th September 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is above average size for a primary school and has just celebrated 25 years since its foundation. It achieved Investors in People in 2002 and a Schools Achievement Award in the previous year. It is involved in a local Education Action Zone initiative. The school serves an area with a high level of disadvantage with many parents unemployed and above average number of pupils in receipt of free school meals. The level of pupil mobility is around 10 per cent. The pupil population is mainly of white British origin, with 7 from minority ethnic backgrounds: one pupil currently receives support in learning English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average overall, with one pupil in seven on the special educational needs register.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2790	Nigel Power	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music Religious education
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector	
14991	Alan Hardwicke	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Provision for pupils with special educational needs
20063	Gerry Slamon	Team inspector	English Geography History Physical education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Provision for pupils with English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school is effective in providing good quality education for its pupils. It has improved steadily since it was last inspected and standards have risen in all core subjects. It has a very strong caring ethos, which enables pupils who transfer from other schools to settle in quickly. Pupils are happy in school and enjoy their lessons. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy head who receive good support from the staff and governors. Teaching is good throughout the school and there is a very good system for reviewing the school's development. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- pupils are achieving standards in mathematics and science that are better than in similar schools: attainment in art and design and history continues to be above average, but that in music is below average;
- standards in English are improving, but more attention needs to be given to standards of writing and spelling in other subjects; pupils need more opportunities for speaking aloud;
- leadership and management of the school is good and there is a very good culture of self-evaluation;
- teaching and organisation of the Foundation Stage and the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good, but the special needs co-ordinator needs more time to ensure that the provision continues to be good;
- the procedures for assessing pupils' work and development have improved and are now good tools for supporting learning;
- there is teaching in all years that is imaginative and enthusiastic: it is provided effectively by teachers and Learning Support Assistants working together and stimulates pupils' learning;
- the staff work hard to manage and modify pupils' behaviour, including those who lack self-discipline and are capable of disrupting lessons.

The school has given attention to all the issues identified in the last inspection and made considerable progress in most areas. However, there have been many staff changes and this has restricted the pace of change in a few areas, particularly the provision in music. There is now a strong commitment of all involved in the school to see standards rise further and to maintain the good improvements that have been made.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	E	D	C
mathematics	D	E	D	B
science	D	E	C	B

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. In the Foundation Stage most children achieve well, although attainment when they enter the school is well below average. They are making good progress in reading and number work. The national results in 2002 for pupils at the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics were below average, while that in writing matched the national average. Results in mathematics improved in 2003, when in reading, writing and mathematics the school matched or exceeded similar schools. Pupils who were in Year 6 in 2003 achieved results in mathematics and science that were better than the previous year and matched the national average. The school

performance overall in 2003 was well above that in similar schools although results in English were less strong. The above average standards in art and design and history at the last inspection have been maintained. The standard achieved in music is still below average. Pupils with special educational needs, about one in seven of the school population, and the most able, achieve well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. There is a strong commitment to nurturing moral and social development. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and most are eager to learn. Most behave well and work diligently, but there are some who, if they have any opportunity, tend to be disruptive. Some pupils suffer interruption to their learning when parents take them on holiday during term time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching overall is good and, during the inspection, one lesson in every seven was very good. Teaching is well planned and imaginative. Teachers and Learning Support Assistants work well together and planning between parallel classes is very well co-ordinated. As a result pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and many present the work in their books well.

A balanced and broad curriculum is offered by the school that includes French in Years 5 and 6, personal, social, citizenship and health education throughout the school and a very good range of extra-curricular activities, in which many pupils participate. The school cares very effectively for its pupils, welcomes parents into school and tells them regularly about school events and their children's progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. There is a very good climate of self-evaluation in which all members of staff and the governors review the school's achievements and developments in order to determine future direction. This had led to the raising of standards generally and to impressive improvement in provision both in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with special educational needs. However, the co-ordinator for special educational needs needs more time to ensure that the good provision is maintained.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents are very positive about the teaching in the school and find the school approachable. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the help they receive from the adults in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the standard of literacy, particularly writing.
- ensure that plans to improve music are implemented.
- ensure that the special educational needs co-ordinator has enough time to fulfil her statutory duties.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is **good**: pupils are making **good** progress in their reading and number work. In Years 1 and 2 pupils achievement is **satisfactory** and girls are now performing as well as boys in lessons. In Years 3 to 6 achievement is also **satisfactory** overall, but boys are attaining higher levels than girls, particularly in mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage children are achieving well, except in mathematical development where achievement is very good and physical development where it is satisfactory.
- Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall, but standards in English are below average, particularly in writing, spelling and speaking.
- Standards in mathematics and science have improved consistently and are now close to national averages at the end of Year 6, where boys performed significantly better than girls in mathematics in national tests in 2003.
- Achievement in art and design and history continues to be good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and the higher attaining pupils are achieving well.
- Achievement is still below average in music as was the position at the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

A summary of the standards achieved in national tests in 2002 is given below. These represent improvement on the last inspection and are higher than those in 2001. This is part of a continuing pattern of improvement over the last four years.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.8 (24.7)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	26.4 (24.1)	26.7 (26.6)
science	28.5 (27.0)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 50 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Standards in 2003 continued to rise in all three core subjects. Pupils in Year 2 achieved results above the national average in reading, but overall the results in writing, mathematics and science were below the national average. However, the higher attaining pupils achieved results that matched the national average, except in science, but performed at least as well as the average in similar schools and well above them in reading and mathematics.
2. Pupils in Year 6 achieved results in 2003 that were close to national averages in mathematics and science, but well below the national average in English. Results in English were below the average achieved in similar schools, but in mathematics and science they were above. In English there was little difference in the proportions of boys and girls who attained the nationally expected standard, although more girls nationally achieve this level than boys. Girls performed much better than boys at the higher level. In mathematics and science, boys' results were better than those of girls, significantly so in mathematics.

3. The underachievement of girls in relation to boys is a concern to the school: staff have discussed the situation and have made a conscious effort not to favour boys in the way they teach. During the inspection, inspectors did not detect any bias towards boys or girls in any of the lessons observed. However, there are indications that the community in which the pupils live is a male dominated society and the girls have traditionally had low aspirations. The school is attempting to tackle this and the 2003 national test results at the end of Year 2 suggests they may be having some success, although it is difficult to be sure as the performance of one year group may not be typical.

4. In the subjects for which there are no national tests, pupils are achieving satisfactorily, except in art and design and history where standards are above average and in music where they are below average. Art and history were strong at the last inspection and that standard has been maintained. Music was also a weakness last time and although plans are now in place to try to improve the situation their implementation had been delayed by external factors, such as staffing difficulties. Pupils lack the knowledge and skills expected of them to attain national standards.

5. The school regularly sets targets for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 that the governors feel are realistic and achievable. However, in recent years those targets have not been achieved. Although the headteacher and senior management team undertake a careful analysis of national test performances and identify areas for development and improvement, they have not considered in detail how well the pupils perform who stay in the school from Year 2 to Year 6. Of the group of pupils who sat the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 only about three-quarters were in the school in Year 2 and ten per cent joined the school in Year 6. Thus, the staff do not know how close the pupils who had received the whole of their education from Year 2 through to Year 6 came to achieving the school's targets. This is an extension to the analysis that the senior management team will be undertaking in future.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are **good**, and behaviour is **satisfactory**. Personal development is **good** with moral and social education being the stronger features. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good attitudes to school and enjoy their lessons.
- Behaviour is satisfactory, but there are some pupils who tend to be disruptive.
- Behaviour management is consistent and well organised.
- The school deals very effectively with bullying and all forms of harassment.
- Good relationships reflect the school's very positive ethos.
- Pupils' moral and social education is good with a strong emphasis on raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Good opportunities are provided for the development of independence and personal responsibility.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are involved well in setting their own targets for improvement.
- There is disruption to the learning of some pupils when holidays are taken during term-time.

Commentary

6. In all classes pupils have a good attitude towards school and they are keen and interested to learn. Throughout the school pupils enjoy taking part in the full range of activities and they are enthusiastic and eager to be involved. The good relationships throughout the school encourage pupils to want to learn. Overall behaviour is satisfactory with good behaviour in the Foundation Stage. Staff work hard to provide interesting lessons and activities that encourage pupils to behave sensibly and to develop self-discipline and initiative. There is a significant number of pupils who, if given the opportunity, display disruptive behaviour which affects their own progress and the progress of others. All staff have a consistent approach towards behaviour management and this successfully

reinforces good behaviour through a clear system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils know the school and classroom rules well and most are keen to earn stars and stickers and the reward of 'golden time' for good work and behaviour. Bullying or harassment of any kind is not tolerated and the school deals promptly and very effectively with any incidents which arise. Pupils feel confident that problems are dealt with promptly and effectively.

7. Pupils' personal development is good and this makes a strong contribution to their progress and achievements. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in the development of personal and social skills. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with a strong emphasis on moral and social education. Regular opportunities are provided throughout the curriculum for pupils to consider the world around them and to respect the feelings of others. Assemblies are used well to promote pupils' spiritual awareness and the opportunity to explore values and beliefs and the way in which they impact on people's lives. The school is effectively encouraging pupils to develop a clear awareness of their own culture and to celebrate the richness of a diverse multi-cultural society. During the last year pupils have taken part in an enactment of a Hindu wedding and Japanese and Canadian assemblies have been organised by staff from these countries. Other opportunities for multi-cultural awareness are provided within curriculum areas such as religious education, geography, literacy and, during the recent Arts Week, music. In all classes pupils respond willingly and enthusiastically to the opportunity to take on special responsibilities as monitors, librarians and school council representatives. Pupils of all abilities are involved well in setting personal targets which they understand and work hard to achieve. The school council is well established and pupils' ideas and suggestions for improvements to the life of the school are taken into account and often acted upon.

Attendance

8. The school works hard to promote good attendance and regularly reminds parents of the effect of absence on pupils' progress. Although attendance for the last academic year is in line with the national average the current figures, for the first half of the Autumn term, show a significant number of absences because of family holidays. During this period attendance was 91.5 per cent and unauthorised absence was 3.0 per cent. This results in pupils missing important parts of their education. During the week of the inspection attendance was good. An issue for the school is to examine further the strategies for maintaining good attendance throughout the year in an attempt to change the current practice of parents to withdraw their children from school for holidays in term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.9	School data :	0.0
National data:	5.9*	National data:	0.5*

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.
* figures for the previous year as national data not available for latest complete reporting year*

Exclusions

9. Prior to the last school year no pupil had been permanently excluded. Governors, reluctantly, decided to exclude a pupil last year as they felt that doing so was in the best interest of the pupil.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	187	3	1
No ethnic group recorded	107	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an **effective** education that enables pupils to learn. Teaching is **good**, the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of the pupils and they are **very well** cared for in school.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall and are particularly effective in the Foundation stage and for pupils in Years 5 and 6. In the Foundation Stage teaching is much improved since the last inspection. There is **very good** teamwork between teachers and Learning Support Assistants. Teachers recognise the need to interest pupils and keep them occupied. Pupils respond **well** and many make **good** progress as a result.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Encouragement and engagement of pupils.
- A valuable contribution is made to pupils' learning by Learning Support Assistants.
- Enthusiastic and imaginative teaching which captures pupils' interest.
- Enjoyment of pupils for their learning and their desire to acquire new knowledge.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 62 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0 %)	10 (16 %)	33 (53 %)	19 (31 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

10. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are imaginative and taught enthusiastically with provision made so that all pupils are able to make progress. The work in pupils' books indicates that the good quality of teaching seen during the inspection is maintained when inspectors are not present. In the Foundation Stage nearly all the teaching seen was good and some of it was very good. This is in contrast to the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory. Much good work has been done to retrieve and develop the provision in the reception class. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 receive teaching that is always satisfactory and more often good. In Years 3 to 6 more than seven lessons in every ten seen during the inspection were good or better. Over the inspection as a whole

the quality of teaching in one lesson in every six was very good. No teaching was unsatisfactory whereas during the last inspection one lesson in nine was judged less than satisfactory.

11. Teachers prepare their lessons well and work closely with Learning Support Assistants both in the planning and the teaching of lessons. Lessons are interesting and varied with changes of activity during the lesson, so that pupils remain involved and most are keen to learn. They respect their teachers and Learning Support Assistants and are happy in the school. The quality of teaching and the imaginative approaches used stimulate a good work ethic amongst the pupils. In addition to being effective in teaching the curriculum, teachers ensure that pupils behave themselves and concentrate on the tasks they have been set. They are fully aware of the pupils who tend to try to disrupt lessons and are quick to take appropriate and necessary action to ensure that other pupils are not distracted from their work.

12. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively taught, in line with the particular needs identified in their Individual Education Plans. These are well drawn up by class teachers. There is a good balance between in-class support by class teachers and Learning Support Assistants, and special groups withdrawn from class. Because of this well-judged support pupils achieve well, and make good progress. The activities they are given are well chosen, and the caring style of teaching builds their confidence and self esteem.

13. Teachers are mindful of the range in pupils' attainment in the same class and set tasks that are appropriate to the pupils' stage of development and understanding. In many lessons this involves some work in groups: the management of the class on these occasions is greatly helped by the presence of Learning Support Assistants, who sometimes work with individuals who have a specific need or with a group of pupils with special educational needs. However, the Learning Support Assistant is not always assigned to help the lower attaining pupils: in one mathematics lesson the class teacher worked with a group of pupils with special educational needs on an information and communication technology (ICT) activity while the Learning Support Assistant effectively provided support for the rest of the class in their graph work activity. The Learning Support Assistants play an important role in the teaching provision in the school and work well in teams with teachers. The school is fortunate in the quality of Learning Support Assistant it employs, as it is with its current teacher force.

14. Throughout the school, but particularly in Years 3 to 6, teachers are mindful that girls have not been performing as well as boys. Accordingly, they are trying to involve girls more and encouraging them to answer questions and take a more active part in lessons. However, they are careful not to discourage the boys. In the lessons observed by inspectors there was no indication of girls being less motivated to learn than boys, but it may be a year or two before the performance of girls matches that of boys in the national tests at the end of Year 6.

15. The school has worked hard to develop effective assessment systems. This has been done on a whole staff basis, so that everyone involved works in the same way, and produces records and information that are useful and understandable to others. Target setting has been well developed and, after a variety of trials, a system of putting literacy and numeracy targets inside the covers of pupils' books has been put into effect. This ensures that pupils know what their targets are, and what they need to do in order to improve. Discussions with pupils showed that they are aware of their targets, and can say what progress they are making. The work in pupils' books is often clearly laid out and carefully presented. The books are marked regularly, although there is some inconsistency in the use of comments to show pupils how they can improve.

16. Teachers keep all assessment information in standard files, which are completed according to an annual timetable of assessment activities. Files are then passed on to the next class. Teachers know their pupils well, and understand their individual needs. They identify pupils who have the capacity to make quicker progress and try to provide activities that will challenge them. Their short-term planning also includes provision for assessing pupils' understanding in lessons, so that this can help in planning where they need to go next.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced and of **good** quality. It enables pupils to achieve **satisfactorily** overall, and **well** in the Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented, are **very well** included, and enabled to achieve **well**. A **very good** range of extra-curricular activities together with **very good** use of visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning experiences. The quality of accommodation and resources in the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is inclusive of pupils of all abilities, backgrounds and groups.
- The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, including higher attaining pupils, is good.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of interesting visits.
- Visitors make a very valuable contribution to the enrichment of the basic curriculum.
- The provision for developing literacy across the curriculum is in need of further development.

Commentary

17. The school's curriculum is well planned and organised. It makes a positive contribution to the quality of education provided for the pupils. The involvement of all staff in planning the curriculum helps to ensure that there is good continuity in the way it is taught throughout the school. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects and religious education there is a good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. This latter programme equips pupils well in their understanding of personal, moral and cultural issues that they might meet in society.

18. The school's basic curriculum is further supplemented by the teaching of French in Years 5 and 6. The school provides a good range of visits for pupils of different ages. Last year this included a visit to County Hall where the school had been selected to contribute a panel to a large tapestry on public display. The school also organises an annual residential visit for the older pupils.

19. A wide range of visitors also come into school to work with the pupils. The local vicar is a regular and well-known visitor, and parents also come in to help in a variety of ways. The school's recent Art and Design Week was enjoyed by pupils of all ages, and involved artists and musicians sharing skills such as wood carving, mosaic work and Islamic music.

20. The provision of extra-curricular clubs and activities is very good, and pupils of all ages benefit very well from the opportunities provided. Staff, parents and visitors run clubs, both at lunchtime and before and after school. These include:

- Recorder club
- Home study/ book club
- 2 computer clubs
- Dance/ Yoga club
- Chess club
- 3 football clubs, including 1 run by Colchester United Trainers
- Sports, netball and swimming clubs
- Embroidery club
- Groundforce club
- Music club.

21. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, including gifted and talented pupils. Their work is well planned, and they are given appropriate activities. In many lessons they are well supported by Learning Support Assistants, whose work makes a valuable

contribution to their learning. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are very well included in all aspects of the school's life. In some lessons seen during the inspection there was disruption to learning caused by noise from adjoining areas. The open-plan nature of some parts of the school means that care is needed, such as when classes are moving to or from the hall, so as not to spoil the working atmosphere in other rooms, and so restrict the curriculum experienced in those classes.

22. Opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, and particularly writing, skills through their work in other subjects are underdeveloped. Although teachers are often good at using correct vocabulary in different subjects, they often give only limited chances for pupils to write at length about what they are doing. Provision for music also needs further attention, so that the time allocated to it is better used.

23. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, are met.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. Pupils' achievements and personal development are **very well** monitored and staff provide them with **very good** support, advice and guidance. Pupils are involved **well** in decision-making about the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a happy and safe environment where all pupils are valued and very well cared for.
- All staff know pupils well and relationships are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support.
- Induction arrangements are very good.
- The school has very good links with outside support agencies.
- Pupils are involved well in improving their environment through the School Council.
- The school is committed to the development of the Healthy Schools project.

Commentary

24. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are very good. Pupils are happy in school and all are provided with very good advice and guidance. Pupils are very well supported by staff, who know them well and are committed to ensuring that all pupils learn in a safe and secure environment. The very good relationships and the school's positive ethos of celebration and encouragement help to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. This makes a strong contribution to their progress and personal development.

25. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support that enables them to be fully involved in all activities and to make good progress. Their learning, social, and emotional needs are clearly identified, and their day-to-day care is well managed. Full access to all outside support agencies ensure that pupils with special problems are very well cared for. Parents and carers are consulted at all stages to ensure that all aspects of the care and well-being of pupils are used to help them gain maximum benefit from all they do at school. Child protection procedures are good and the school exercises its responsibilities with vigilance and care.

26. Pupils settle down quickly and parents are well informed about the life of the school because induction arrangements have been improved and are now very good. Pupils joining the school during the academic year soon settle happily into the community, because staff are committed to ensuring that they receive a positive welcome and are well supported. Through the school's close links with the secondary school pupils in Year 6 are very well prepared for transfer to the next phase of their education.

27. Pupils value their role on the School Council and feel confident that staff listen to their suggestions and that they have made improvements to the school. Pupils enjoy being part of the Healthy Schools project and the school's strong commitment towards a healthy lifestyle makes a valuable contribution to pupils' welfare and their personal and social education. In particular, the school's practice of encouraging pupils to eat fruit or raw vegetables and to drink water at break, rather than consume junk foods and coloured drinks, has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents and the school works hard to encourage them to be involved. Links with the community and other schools are **good** and enrich the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The welcoming nature of the school encourages good links with parents.
- The school seeks to involve parents through regular communication.
- A good amount of information is provided for parents, but reports are not always written in a language style which all parents will understand.
- Parents of children in the Foundation Stage are involved well.
- Many parents are supportive, but a significant number finds it difficult to support children's learning at home.
- Family Learning courses are not well attended.
- The active Friends of Spring Meadow association provides additional resources for the school.

Commentary

28. The school works hard to involve parents in its work and welcomes them into school. Parents feel that staff are approachable and feel confident that their children are well cared for. In the reception class parents are made very welcome at the start of the day and they value the opportunity to talk to teachers and to help children to change their reading books. Parents are kept well informed through regular helpful newsletters, explanatory leaflets about the curriculum and information each term giving their child's targets for improvement. Whilst many parents provide valuable help with their children's learning at home, there is a significant number who find it difficult to maintain a partnership with the school. A small number of parents and a grandparent help regularly in classrooms, mainly in the youngest classes.

29. With the support of Tendring Adult Community College the school tries very hard to encourage parents to take part in family learning courses and activities but at present attendance is limited. Parents and their children are supported very well through the induction period including those who join the school during the academic year. The school has a good system whereby teachers meet with individual parents after their child has been in the school for two weeks. 'Meet the Teacher' sessions each term for other parents have just been introduced. The Friends of Spring Meadow are an active small group of parents who organise regular fund-raising events to provide the school with additional learning resources. They have been very successful in recent years and have provided generously for additional resource purchases.

30. The reports to parents are good and provide sufficient regular information to inform parents about progress. Parents of pupils in Years 1 to 6 receive a written report twice a year, and each term for the Foundation Stage. Some parents may find difficulty in understanding some of the information in reports, because the language used is not always clear and sometimes rather technical.

31. The school has good links with the community that help to enrich the curriculum and pupils' experiences. Sportsmen from Colchester United Football Club and Premier Sports visit the school each week to work with pupils during the day and for after-school clubs. Members of the School Council have visited the Guildhall to observe the Town Council's Environment and Highways Committee in conference. The school's activities are regularly reported and publicised as there are

good links with the local newspaper. There are also good links with other schools through partnership with the Harwich cluster of schools. Pupils benefit from joint activities and sporting events. Pupils join with other schools each year for the Mayor Making ceremony, community carols, Rhyme Against Crime and harvest collections. The improved liaison links with the secondary school have enabled pupils to take part in dance activities led by specialist staff, as well as ensuring a smooth transition for pupils in Year 6.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is **very well** led by the headteacher and deputy head with **good** support from the governors and senior management team. All aspects of the school's operation are **well** managed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school.
- There is a very strong climate of self-evaluation to which all staff and governors are encouraged to make contributions.
- Good arrangements are in place for monitoring the work of the school.
- There is a very clear commitment to inclusion.
- The school has very good procedures in place for its financial management.

Commentary

32. There is a very clear sense of purpose in the school, that is shared by governors and all members of staff. The governors meet regularly, have established effective committees and have a commitment to raise standards. They appreciate the difficult circumstances in which the school operates and are actively supportive of the headteacher and staff. Many are regular visitors, when they will observe activities within the school, including lessons, and complete reports of their observations. However, while accepting that the attainment of pupils when they enter the school is well below average, the governing body still sets targets that are challenging, while realistic, and they want to see all pupils succeeding. In the last three years the pupils in Year 6 have not achieved those targets, but the staff and governors have not ascertained how much the failure to do so can be attributed to the mobility of the pupil population.

33. The governors play a significant role in shaping the direction of the school, as do all members of staff. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, the governors and staff (teachers, Learning Support Assistants and mid-day assistants) meet in mixed groups to review the work of the school and to identify priorities for the future. By meeting in mixed groups a joint perception is achieved from a variety of perspectives. This is an effective system for all those who will be involved in driving the school forward will have contributed to planning its improvement. In addition to the involvement of governors and staff in setting the agenda for the schools' development, the senior management team undertakes a careful analysis of the school's performance in national tests, which is also used to inform planning. The good assessment procedures for checking pupils' progress and a system of monitoring conducted by headteacher, deputy head, stage co-ordinators and subject co-ordinators provide further effective methods of self-evaluation. The school has a very strong commitment to inclusion making this plain in its prospectus. Indications of the inclusive nature of the school are the opportunities that are given to parents and pupils to make suggestions of how the school could be improved.

34. The headteacher has a very good knowledge of the school's curricular provision and has a clear idea of the way she would like to see it evolve, particularly in the development of a more holistic approach with more links across the curriculum. She has been instrumental in initiating new developments, particularly in early reading and early number work. These research projects are proving effective in raising pupils' awareness and understanding and should in time contribute to improvement in standards. The Foundation Stage, which was an area of weakness in the last inspection, is now strong and is providing pupils with a good start to their education. In particular,

effective linking of the different areas of learning in the Foundation Stage ensures that all aspects are taught in sufficient strength. Unfortunately, many pupils enter the school with well below average attainment: the withdrawal of plans for a nursery, which was a great disappointment to the governors and staff, has left these children at a disadvantage.

35. The headteacher has also re-organised the provision for pupils with special educational needs and this provision, now under the guidance of the deputy head, is much improved. All aspects of the administration of special educational needs are well organised. Documentation is up-to-date, and Individual Educational Plans are working documents that are regularly reviewed and updated. The time that the deputy head has, as special educational needs co-ordinator, to carry out her duties related to that role is, however, too limited. Because she has a number of important management roles in the school, as well as class-teaching responsibilities, it is not possible at present for her to carry out all these duties effectively. Ways should be found to set aside more time, on a regular basis, for her to deal exclusively with special needs matters. Alternatively, the responsibility for special educational needs co-ordinator could be passed to another member of staff. This is a key issue on which the school needs to take action. Provision for the two pupils for whom English is an additional language is good and only one now needs language support.

36. As a result of several staff changes performance management procedures have not progressed as quickly as the headteacher would have wished, but a good programme of in-service training for all the staff exists. The school also embraces local initiatives with local schools and is an active member of the Education Action Zone. In addition, the school subscribes to the School Leadership Partnership, through which staff are acquiring new skills and awareness that provide a further benefit to pupils and their learning. Staff at all levels work very well together and teamwork is particularly effective, particularly in the planning that takes place in year groups and between teachers and Learning Support Assistants.

37. The administrative and financial staff are also an effective team and ensure that visitors or callers enjoy a welcoming reception, help with the smooth running of the school and keep very good control of financial matters. The finance officer and the governing body's chair of finance work well together in ensuring that financial control is properly exercised and also take care to keep the governors informed about likely changes in budgetary matters, taking into account increases in staff costs and predicted changes in pupil population. Currently, the school gives good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	834 629	Balance from previous year	47 000
Total expenditure	779 068	Balance carried forward to the next	55 560
Expenditure per pupil	2 375		

COMMUNITY PROVISION

What is the effectiveness of Community Provision?

There are good plans and good prospects, but this is still a fairly new and developing area.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The initial provision is effective and provides a good base for development of further activities.
- Many good links established with external agencies.
- Lack of tradition of life-long learning amongst parents.

Commentary

38. The school has good links with the community, and is working hard to improve the partnership further and to enrich the impact on pupils' learning. The governing body has recently established a new Parents and Community Relations Committee, which is actively investigating ways of bringing the school and the community closer together. A small number of local activities is held on the school premises each week and these include a Karate Club and a T'ai Chi group, but the school seeks to extend the use of its facilities further. Through their involvement with the Education Action Zone the school successfully acts as an open school during holiday periods when children from all over the area attend activities in sports, arts and ICT. The curriculum is well supported by members of the Colchester United Football Club and Premier Sports who work with pupils each week to develop their sporting abilities. Pupils work with the local police on 'Rhyme against Crime' and the school nurse visits regularly to talk to pupils about a healthy lifestyle.

39. Good links have been developed with Warwick University who are conducting programmes of early reading and early number research with the school. In science, and through the good connection the school has with the port of Harwich, pupils have been involved well in marine projects organised by the universities of York and Essex. The school works closely with Tendring Community College in its endeavour to encourage parents to take part in family learning courses. Although several courses have been set up attendance has been limited and the current initiative, a Story Sack course, has so far not attracted any parents.

40. The recent Arts Week held at the school enabled pupils to work with visiting artists on a range of practical skills. The school was selected to represent the Tendring Area and to display their art work in County Hall. As part of their Silver Jubilee celebrations pupils from all classes are currently enthusiastically working with two members of the local Embroidery Guild and designing and embroidering a large mural for display in the hall. The local vicar is a regular visitor to lead assemblies. At present there is only a limited number of visitors from the community who are able to visit to talk to pupils about special topics. Pupils take part in the community carol service and they visit local residential homes to sing to the elderly.

41. The school uses the local environment well to enrich the curriculum, and pupils go out regularly to visit places of educational and cultural interest. These include scientific investigative work with Harwich Haven Authority at the harbour, the lifeboat station and Abberton Reservoir nature research. Members of the School Council have visited the Guildhall to observe a council meeting and some pupils attend the Mayor Making ceremony. Pupils also visit Braintree Museum, Flatford Mill, Colchester Zoo and local churches. Older pupils take part in a residential visit to Kids Klub, which contributes well to their personal and social development.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved very significantly since the last inspection. The children enter the reception classes either in the September or January before their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection there were 19 children on roll. Standards on entry are generally well below those expected for children of this age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Although many have attended some form of pre-school provision elsewhere the school does not have a nursery. As a result and, despite the good teaching they receive, the majority of children do not have sufficient time to reach an acceptable standard in communication, language and literacy and in physical development before entering Year 1. However, children achieve well because of the good teaching and the interesting, relevant curriculum that meets their particular needs. The accommodation inside is good and is arranged with care and attention. The outside facilities are barely adequate because of the sloping surface and lack of large toys and climbing frames.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the good teaching they receive and the positive relationships established.
- Every opportunity is taken to enhance children's social development.

Commentary

43. The development of children's personal and social development is given high priority and underpins all the work in the reception classes. As a result, most children will have achieved the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Children quickly settle into a caring and safe environment where basic routines and high expectations are fostered. The very good working relationships between most members of staff and volunteer helpers are effective in showing children how to relate to each other. The warm welcome extended to parents and children at the start of each school day helps to make children feel secure and confident, and gives parents the opportunity to discuss any urgent matters with a member of staff. Tasks are very well prepared so that children's interest is quickly engaged. Care is taken to assess children's different experiences before they come to school and adults work hard to instil a sense of belonging, based on personal care and making children feel comfortable and liked. Good teaching, which emphasises kindness to each other and planned activities that require co-operation, result in good social development. Members of staff place strong emphasis on the development of children's self-esteem, confidence and independence. As a result, children respond well to new challenges, such as changing independently for physical education lessons and tidying away after activities. All opportunities are grasped to extend children's social development. Preparing healthy snacks in small groups and eating together, for example, are seen by staff as opportunities to teach about etiquette and hygiene. Girls and boys are encouraged to play and work together, and take part in rich learning opportunities so that they develop a good range of skills across all areas of learning. The well structured induction arrangements, which include home visits, do much to ensure that children's first experiences of school are happy ones.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is generally a good common understanding amongst staff and volunteer helpers of the need to take every opportunity to engage children in meaningful discussion and conversation.
- However, it was evident during the inspection that one member of staff needs further training so as to be more proactive in this respect.

Commentary

44. Individually, children make good progress towards the early learning goals in this area of learning. In response to the good teaching they receive, a small number of children currently in the reception class is likely to reach the goals by the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. However, most will not achieve the recommended standard because of their attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Rich opportunities are provided for children to improve their speaking and listening skills through role-play, stories, poems and rhymes. Effective questioning encourages them to give considered answers and builds on prior learning. The good relationships established between adults and children mean that children grow in confidence because adults are interested in what they have to say. However, there is one member of the team who is less effective than the others and would benefit from further training. There is good provision for reading development. Children enjoy books and listen attentively when stories are read to them. They share big books, reading together in groups and engaging in individual reading at home and in school. They have a growing number of words they recognise in text. Opportunities are frequently taken to emphasise sounds that different letters make and to extend vocabulary. The quality of reading by an adult during one story time held children spellbound and helped to increase their interest in reading. A special feature was how well children's comments about the story were accepted and questions answered. After the story had been read, children were challenged to select words from the word bank on display and to match them with similar words in the book. Most could already recognise *and*, *I*, and *in* and chose the correct words from the word bank. Although it is early in the term, most children can already recognise their name and some can write these in a legible hand. Past work shows that, by the end of the year, higher attaining children are able to write phrases or sentences, especially when a teacher or other member of staff supports them.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good because the teacher in charge has a very good understanding of how young children learn mathematics.
- Children really enjoy this area of learning and achieve very well, because they are given a good range of practical activities.

Commentary

45. Most children are on course to reach the early learning goals for mathematics because of the very good teaching they receive. They learn to count with increasing confidence and work well when investigating numbers. Teacher and support staff use an interesting range of teaching methods and resources so that children develop a practical understanding of all aspects of mathematics. Very good links with other areas of learning such as literacy, physical education and art and design make the tasks meaningful to the children. Work on display show that children, during the Arts Week, identified different mathematical shapes in works by Keith Haring. In a physical education lesson in

the school hall, children developed their understanding of directions by moving *forwards*, *backwards*, *over* and *under*. They are also given opportunities to program a robot to move in given directions.

46. Adults introduce mathematical language very effectively and, consequently, children name shapes such as squares, triangles and circles and use terminology such as *plus* and *equals* when adding. Higher attainers know that 'an equation has an equals sign.' In a very good lesson, after the teacher had introduced children to 'rational counting', most could add $IIII + IIIII = 10$, 'because we added 10 lines'. In this lesson, they went on to recognise and explain simple patterns using shapes and colours, or when threading coloured beads. Members of staff plan a very good range of practical activities, including the use of ICT, to further children's understanding of number, shape and measures.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective in widening pupils' appreciation of the world in which they live.
- A good range of interesting activities is planned to promote learning in this area.
- Children have many opportunities to use computers during the school day.
- Most children will achieve the recommended standard by the end of the reception year.

Commentary

47. Children are provided with a good range of experiences which help extend their understanding of the world about them. They are given many opportunities to play educationally, and to experience resources which promote good achievement. Well planned activities, such as walks within the local environment, visits to the beach and to the shops give children a good knowledge of the area in which they live. Trips to the Country Park to note the changes in nature over the different seasons are well used to develop their understanding of the world. As a result, children are able to talk about and describe features of the wider world, and to express their views about features they like or dislike. They are taught to use the digital camera to photograph features they see on their trips, as for example, when they photograph different parts of their school and then describe how these different areas are used. In ICT, they are very well taught to use the mouse to control the screen cursor when moving images across the screen. Photographic evidence shows that children learn to use the program 'colour magic' to draw boats in their summer topic 'Water'. They are taught to program a 'Roamer' to move in a given direction and to consolidate their understanding of *forwards* and *backwards*. As a result of the good range of activities, children show an emerging scientific knowledge of plant growth and the conditions needed for this. They also develop an understanding of their own personal history through the use of photographs of themselves now and while younger. A mother who brought her newly born baby into school, showed children how she cares for the baby and they were able to see the difference between babies and 5-year old children. They even measured the baby using cubes and compared it to their own height. Good questioning is used during snack times to make children think about health and safety issues, such as the need for clean hands and a healthy diet. Teachers and support staff effectively teach children that some families within the community have similar beliefs to theirs, but that others do not. They are introduced to the arts from other cultures, such as Islamic music, to deepen their understanding of a range of cultures other than their own.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching by the class teacher in the hall lesson seen was very good.
- Many children do not achieve the recommended standard because provision for regular outdoor play, using a range of large toys and climbing apparatus, is inadequate.
- There is a lack of focus in many of the outdoor sessions.

Commentary

48. Children receive weekly opportunities for physical activities, such as running, jumping, climbing and balancing, during timetabled lessons in the school hall. In the lesson in the school hall the very good relationships established with children by the class teacher resulted in all the children having a fun time as well as learning to use space and to move in different ways and directions.

49. However, the outside accommodation, although used regularly, does not provide children with the opportunities they need to develop physical skills and confidence. The sloping surface makes it difficult to organise activities with balls or trikes or other wheeled vehicles, and restricts opportunities for physical development and makes it hard to plan appropriate learning objectives. The development of the outdoor area has been delayed because the school was expecting to build a nursery unit, but permission for this has unfortunately been revoked. As a result outdoor sessions are restricted in their focus on early learning goals in this area.

50. Children are given frequent opportunities during the school day to use small tools and instruments, including paint brushes, pencils, scissors, crayons and others to develop their fine motor skills. Management of children is very good, which ensures their safety when using apparatus and tools. Groups of children, both boys and girls, were seen manipulating small and large construction equipment with interest and dexterity.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and children achieve well.
- The children played a full part in the school's Arts Week. This enhanced their learning and added to their enjoyment.

Commentary

51. Children are provided with an environment in which creativity and expressiveness are valued. Teaching is good in this area of the curriculum. Members of staff are effective in getting responses from children in relation to what they see, hear, feel and imagine and most children reach the standard expected for their age by the end of their time in the reception. Their creative development is successfully fostered through a wide range of experiences such as mixing paints, choosing particular colours for a purpose, and making constructions, collages and paintings. They are given many opportunities to glue, stick and join materials together. Children enjoy the activities very much. Linked to their literacy work on 'The Three Little Pigs', they design and construct houses for each of the pigs using a variety of materials and then paint them 'to make them look nice'. Work on display shows that during the Arts Week children worked with visiting artists on a range of exciting art and design. They used graffiti to decorate their playground fence, were shown how to paint people using oils, added tiles to make mosaics and drew shapes on paper with wax crayons and painted over

them with brusho. Such experiences enrich children's learning and enhance their spiritual, social and cultural development. In whole class music lessons, and in small groups, children explore how sounds can be made, sing simple songs from memory and match movements to music. The well designed role-play areas provide good opportunities for children to play co-operatively and develop their imagination. They extend their language skills by re-enacting familiar situations from stories that have been read to them or by making up their own.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils achieve well in lessons.
- Standards are below average in speaking and writing.
- Handwriting and basic reading skills are being well developed through regular practice.
- Learning Support Assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and they achieve well.
- Standards in spelling are weak.
- Pupils do not have enough well planned opportunities to develop their writing or speaking throughout the curriculum or the school day.

Commentary

52. Standards in English are rising because of the school's focus on improvement in this subject and the efforts of the recently appointed co-ordinator. However, pupils' attainment overall is still below the national average. This is evident in test results for 2002, although results have been improving steadily since the last inspection. At that time it was reported that standards were well below average in reading and below average in writing at the end of Year 2. Standards in English at the end of Year 6 were well below average. In the 2002 tests reading standards at the end of Year 2 were below average, but writing was in line with the national standard. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 was also below the national average. When national comparative data for 2003 tests is available, it is likely that in Year 2, standards in reading will be average while standards in writing will be below average. It is also likely that standards in English will be below average for pupils who were then in Year 6.

53. Standards in listening are average in Year 2 and Year 6, but below average in speaking. Younger pupils are limited by a restricted vocabulary because of the well below average attainment on entry to the school. Older pupils often lack confidence in speaking to large groups, such as in assemblies, and what they say is often inaudible. Teachers try to extend pupils' vocabulary and to get pupils to communicate effectively by:

- encouraging paired discussions in lessons;
- challenging pupils to use interesting vocabulary.

54. Provision for French in Years 5 and 6 helps to develop pupils' listening skills as well their awareness of the structure and potential of language. The teacher employs a mainly oral approach, presenting pupils with a clear model of spoken French. Most pupils enjoy interacting with the teacher and each other and this helps to develop their confidence in speaking.

55. An additional factor which would contribute further to improvement is:

- provision of regular, well planned opportunities to develop pupils' confidence in speaking aloud, through drama activities, for example.

56. Pupils achieve well in reading and standards have improved and are now close to the national average for pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6. Initiatives that have been instrumental in raising standards are:

- recent improvements in reading resources has resulted in a positive reading culture;
- the Book Week has increased pupils' interest in reading;
- improved library provision and its regular use by pupils;
- improved provision for classroom book corners;
- close analysis of test results to identify weaknesses in provision.

57. There are good opportunities during the day for pupils to engage in group, paired and silent reading. All pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home and when younger pupils read with parents or carers it helps them to move forward quicker. The Early Reading Research programme is well used to teach basic skills and pupils are clear about strategies that they need to read unfamiliar words. As a result, most tackle new material confidently.

58. In an excellent Early Reading Research session observed, it was a delight to see the total involvement of all pupils and the concentration with which they worked. They became so involved in responding to the tasks set them that the pace of their learning was very high, so much so that many were breathless at the end of the session!

59. Older pupils are developing firm preferences for the work of different authors such as Dick King Smith, JK Rowling and Jacqueline Wilson. Year 6 pupils talk with good understanding of some of the works of Shakespeare, such as Macbeth and The Midsummer Night's Dream, to which they have been introduced.

60. Standards in writing are below average for pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6. The school has wisely shifted its focus to writing and is exploring all avenues to improve provision. Pupils achieve well in English lessons because of the good quality teaching they receive. The quality of pupils' handwriting is generally good because of regular practice, and pupils are expected to present their work neatly. The school is aware of the weakness in spelling. There is an increased emphasis on pupils' writing for a range of purposes and standards are rising because:

- teachers have an improved understanding of the levels at which pupils are working;
- assessment information is well used to set challenging targets for pupils to achieve;
- teachers' marking often shows pupils how they can improve the quality of their work;
- pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their writing activities and achieve well;
- writing tasks are interesting.

61. In its drive to improve standards in writing the school needs to consider:

- giving pupils more time to write in all literacy lessons by moving guided reading slots to other parts of the school day;
- identifying how other subjects can contribute to pupils' writing and, in so doing, look at how the use of worksheets in science, for example, deprive pupils of opportunities to write.

62. In the lessons seen teaching was good overall. It was very good in three of the lessons and good in the other six. Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills through interesting tasks in English lessons. This, together with teachers' high expectations and the good relationships they establish with their pupils, results in pupils working with interest and concentration. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, although a significant number of pupils had been identified as having behavioural problems, all worked with enthusiasm as they wrote recipes for Bonfire Night. This use of interesting tasks as a means of managing pupils' behaviour is a common feature in all English lessons.

63. The two pupils for whom English is an additional language are making good progress as a result of the support they have been receiving. One of them now no longer needs additional specialist support.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. The inspection team has identified the development of pupils' language and literacy skills across the curriculum as a key issue for action. Pupils do not have enough opportunities in some subjects to write about what they learn. In particular the school should seek to raise pupils' skills in English by:

- having a more consistent approach to writing and spelling in other subjects, and
- providing regular planned opportunities to increase pupils' confidence in speaking aloud.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last inspection: boys have achieved good results at the end of Year 6 for the last two years.
- Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage because the teaching is well-focused on pupils learning mathematics.
- The performance of girls up to the end of Year 2 has improved and now matches the performance of boys, but further work is needed on improving the standards attained by girls further up the school.
- The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who gives appropriate attention to the use of ICT and encourages the use of numerical skills in other areas of subjects.
- There is inconsistent practice in the way teachers use comments to encourage and guide pupils when they mark their work.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils respond well to the imaginative way topics are presented
- More attention should be given to the learning of multiplication tables so that pupils are able quickly to recall multiplication facts.

Commentary

65. Results in mathematics achieved in national tests in 2002 were well below average by the end of Year 2. In 2003 standards had improved, but were still below average, although the higher attaining pupils achieved results that were slightly above the national average. When compared with the performances of pupils in similar schools the results were below average, but in 2003 they were well above average. In 2002 boys achieved better results than girls, but in 2003 there was little difference.

66. There was a similar improvement in the results at the end of Year 6. In 2002 standards were below the national average, but by 2003 they reached the national average for the expected level 4, although the proportion achieving the higher level 5 was below the national figure. In relation to similar schools results at level 4 were well above the average and those at level 5 were average. Boys performed considerably better than girls in 2003, with nine out of ten achieving level 4 compared with less than three in four nationally.

67. There are several contributory factors to this continuing improvement. There is good teaching in all parts of the school and pupils work well, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where the setting arrangements help teachers to demand more of the higher attaining pupils. There is good leadership of the subject by the co-ordinator who supports and guides her colleagues and monitors pupils' work. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, often through the valuable support work of Learning Support Assistants enables them to make good progress.

68. In the reception class pupils are making good progress with their understanding of number. They can count to ten accurately and from any number to another forwards or backwards. The introduction of the Early Number Research programme is having a positive effect upon their learning. They know the numbers to ten, and some of them know more, and are able to solve simple equations, using correct mathematical vocabulary.

69. The use of vocabulary is a feature of mathematics teaching and learning, although pupils do not write much about mathematics even when interpreting information provided in graphical form. The techniques of computation are clearly taught and well known, although there is some variation in method that the co-ordinator plans to address. Regular and frequent attention is given to mental mathematics, but too long is often given for pupils to calculate what they should already know. Too

few pupils have ready recall of multiplication table facts and need to be challenged much more often so that they are much more familiar with them.

70. Teachers prepare their lessons well, match the pace well to the capabilities of their pupils and teach with an enthusiasm that stimulates pupils to respond positively. Many pupils name mathematics as one of their favourite subjects and they do so because they like the teaching and feel that they learn new things. Occasionally, as their books reveal, they spend too long on repetitive exercises when they have already mastered the technique. Re-visiting some of the topics met previously, to ensure that the knowledge and skills have been retained, would be a better use of the time. The work in pupils' books is usually well presented and care is taken with the layout used. Books are marked regularly but the marking is inconsistent and does not often indicate to pupils how they could improve.

71. The mathematics curriculum has been expanded since the last inspection to include more investigative work helping pupils to become more aware of the applications and uses of mathematics. More use is also now made of ICT, particularly in drawing graphs and examining probability. Classes or groups of pupils regularly visit the ICT suite or use stand-alone computers in their own classroom. Occasionally, though, the ICT suite is used, when an inter-active whiteboard in a classroom would be just as effective.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Pupils sometimes use mathematics in other subjects, most specifically in science, geography and design and technology for measuring and weighing and in graphical work. In a religious education lesson pupils' awareness of number enabled a Year 6 class to appreciate the considerable workforce needed by King Solomon to build the temple. The mathematics co-ordinator has determined that the use of mathematics across the curriculum is a priority for further development and is actively seeking to help her colleagues to structure their teaching to include more links between mathematics and other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of scientific investigation is much improved.
- Teaching is good throughout the school, and pupils are given interesting activities.
- All aspects of the curriculum are given good coverage.
- There are good links with other subjects.
- The science co-ordinator would benefit from subject-specific in-service training.

Commentary

73. Standards at the end of Year 2 were found to be in line with expectations. The results of Teacher Assessments for 2003 showed standards to be below those found nationally, but the broader evidence of the inspection showed that pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to achieve the national average. These pupils entered school with below average understanding of the world about them, but they have achieved well since, in relation to their prior attainment. By the end of the year pupils who are currently in Year 6 are in line to achieve standards similar to those found nationally. This is due to consistently good teaching, and good coverage of all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs, and more able pupils, all achieve well. Although boys performed better than girls in national tests no examples were observed during the inspection of differences in the achievements of girls and boys. The school's very effective attention to issues of inclusion ensures that different groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic groups are all fully included. The work is well planned to take account of the needs of pupils of different abilities, and this ensures that all achieve well.

74. Teaching and learning are good overall in both the infant and junior classes. The lessons seen during the inspection varied between satisfactory and very good. Pupils responded well to the practical and enjoyable nature of the activities offered to them in most lessons, and this ensured that they concentrated well, worked hard and achieved well. In work seen in pupils' books there were examples in both Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 to 6, where there was too much reliance on worksheets, and this meant that pupils were not given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills. Teachers are good at using correct scientific language, and expect their pupils to do the same. They do not, however, give them enough opportunities to use this vocabulary in writing at greater length about what they have done.

75. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and pupils now achieve standards which are better than those in similar schools. This improvement is partly due to greater attention being given to scientific investigation. All aspects of the science curriculum are now covered adequately. The new co-ordinator is making a good start to the role, but would benefit from more training in specific science knowledge and will need to make arrangements for further in-service training for staff. Assessment systems have developed well, and the school is now much more systematic in tracking pupils' progress, and sharing information between teachers about how well they are doing. There are good links between science and other subjects, such as when pupils consider the use of different materials in design and technology. Good use is made of ICT in science lessons. Pupils readily use the computers in a variety of ways, such as to produce graphs and tables of the results of their investigations, and to find information from CD-ROMs or the Internet.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision of hardware and software.
- Good development of pupils' basic ICT skills.
- Good use of ICT in some other subjects.
- Good development of staff confidence and skills.
- Need to continue in-service training activities to keep teachers' skills up to date.

Commentary

76. Over the last few years the school has made significant improvements in hardware and software, which have ensured that:

- all pupils have good access to computers, both in classrooms, and the ICT suite.
- the range of software available supports all areas of the curriculum for pupils of all ages.

This improvement means that pupils at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6 achieve standards that are in line with those found nationally.

77. All aspects of the ICT curriculum are given appropriate coverage, and pupils learn to use ICT for word processing, graphics, and data handling. They use the Internet and CD-ROM based software for reference purposes, and experience activities which involve using aspects of ICT to control, monitor and model events.

78. During the inspection the teaching of ICT, both in classroom lessons and in activities in the ICT suite, was satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Teachers are generally confident in using the computers, and pass on their positive attitudes to their pupils. The guidelines provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority are well used, and ensure that a consistent provision of activities is worked through. Teachers' good choices of interesting activities meant that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieved satisfactorily. In a mathematics lesson Year 6 pupils confidently used the interactive whiteboard to play a subtraction game based on

a dartboard. The good use of ICT was exciting and motivating for the pupils, kept them all involved and interested, and developed both their ICT and mathematical skills well.

79. Working with the computers often provides pupils with occasions where they must share and co-operate with others, and where they need to work responsibly when the teacher is not close by. Such activities make worthwhile contributions to pupils' personal and social development. Many pupils have computers at home and so are familiar with basic procedures. Teachers are good at giving pupils responsibility for logging on, finding correct files and printing and saving their work, and pupils respond well to this. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to introduce and set up new systems. He has assembled a collection of examples of pupils' work and has been involved in planning the continued upgrading of the school's ICT facilities. Plans are well advanced for a new, larger, ICT suite, as the present room is too small and quickly becomes hot when crowded. Assessment procedures are developing, as part of the school's overall approach to checking and recording pupils' progress. Much has been done to keep teachers' ICT skills up to date and relevant, and this has resulted in good improvement. This process needs to continue so that future changes and developments are used to the best advantage.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. Good examples were seen during the inspection, and in pupils' previous work, of the use of ICT in other subjects. Discussions with pupils showed that they had a good understanding of using ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects. Amongst the examples seen was a Year 2 mathematics lesson, where a 'Ghost buster' computer game required quick and accurate control of the mouse to find multiples of 10. This helped develop basic ICT skills as well as giving good multiplication practice. In a Year 1 art and design lesson two pupils worked at the computer, using the 'Colour Magic' software to produce a fireworks picture. This required a good range of skills and was a worthwhile contribution to the lesson's objective, of exploring different media.

HUMANITIES

81. In humanities, work was sampled in **history** and **geography**, with only two lessons seen in each subject. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. However, all the evidence indicates that standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 6 are above expectations in history and are as expected for pupils aged 11 in geography. These standards have been well maintained since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy the subjects because teachers organise a range of interesting events such as Egyptian and Viking Days, performances of songs from the time of World War 2, and visiting speakers from India and Japan. These opportunities, together with class visits to places of historical and geographical interest, and the Year 6 residential trip, do much to enrich pupils' experiences as well as their social and cultural awareness. Pupils speak with particular enthusiasm about their work in history. All Year 6 pupils spoken to have become members of the local library so that they can take out books to help them with their history topics.

82. Some good examples of writing were seen in pupils' history books and in displays round the school, but it is evident that in some classes pupils are given too little time to write in lessons. The contribution the subjects can make to 'interesting' writing has not yet been fully realised. The co-ordinators are aware of this and have clear action plans for future improvements.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6.
- Good links to other aspects of pupils' learning.
- A new scheme of work is being implemented, but more resources are needed to support its teaching.

Commentary

83. It was possible only to see lessons in Years 3 to 6, there being no lessons scheduled for younger pupils during the days of the inspection. There was also little written work of pupils on which to base an assessment of standards. However, on the basis of the responses of pupils in the lessons seen, standards are in line with those expected by the agreed syllabus for the subject.

84. The agreed syllabus that is being used is fairly new and the school is at an early stage of implementing the scheme of work. Early signs are that this will be successfully initiated, particularly as there is a built-in assessment system that the school will use. A potential handicap to teaching and learning is the shortage of relevant resources, but the co-ordinator is fully aware of this and is seeking to redress the situation. In addition to Christianity, the syllabus focuses on other religions, including Judaism and Hinduism. There are local resources, including places of worship, to support the teaching of Christianity, but visits to sites of other religions or arrangements for visitors to share their faith are more difficult to organise. Reliance on artefacts or resources such as video recordings as substitutes is necessary on occasions.

85. Teaching in the lessons seen was good on two occasions and very good on the other. The topics were introduced in an exciting way and pupils responded with eagerness and enthusiasm. The lesson time was used well and pupils gained in knowledge and understanding. In all three lessons links were established with other subjects, including design, drama and music. The lessons also made good contributions to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

86. The concern expressed at the time of the last inspection that some pupils were withdrawn from religious education to receive additional practice with reading, has now been dealt with. All participate fully and none is withdrawn by parents. Pupils with special educational needs receive help from Learning Support Assistants where appropriate.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It was not possible to see sufficient lessons in art and design, design and technology and physical education to make firm judgements about provision. In addition to sampling lessons in the subjects, inspectors spoke to co-ordinators about their subjects, examined pupils' work and talked to pupils, teachers and Learning Support Assistants.

Art and design

87. Standards in art and design are higher than those found nationally, and the school has therefore been successful in maintaining high standards since the last inspection. The subject is given a high profile in the school. The display of art work, as well as that of other subjects, is of a high standard throughout the school, and makes a significant impact on the surroundings in which pupils learn. From the youngest classes pupils are taught a good range of art skills and techniques, and given good opportunities to use them. The resulting work is then skilfully displayed so as to show it to best effect. This approach shows pupils that their pictures, models and artefacts are valued and celebrated, and this makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' self-esteem.

88. Good use is made of the work of artists, to show pupils how styles and techniques differ. Such artists include those, from a variety of cultures, who are famous, and also those who live locally and whose work reflects aspects of the local culture and environment. The school's recent Art and Design Week involved all pupils, and was very successful. Activities included wood-carving and the making of a mosaic, both of which were undertaken by groups of pupils of all ages, working with local craftsmen and artists. The resulting work has been displayed in front of the school. Work from previous art projects has also been displayed locally and in the County Hall.

89. The subject is well managed by the experienced and committed co-ordinator. There is a good range of resources available and they are well organised and readily accessible.

Design and technology

90. Pupils achieve standards at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6 which are in line with those found nationally. Pupils develop a good understanding of all aspects of the design process as they move through the school. They are taught to see how planning, making and evaluating their products are all important, and they learn to work safely with the full range of tools and techniques. The teaching of design and technology ensures that pupils are given a good range of interesting, enjoyable activities and that they see the links between this and other subjects. In a Year 3/4 lesson, for example, pupils were using pneumatic devices to make a moving monster. The practical work ensured that they understood how air can be made to operate mechanisms. Standards were not judged at the last inspection, but they are now found to be satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in music are below average, but most pupils make good progress.
- A scheme of work has recently been implemented in order to provide structure to music teaching.
- A programme of support and training has been initiated to provide teachers with knowledge, skills and confidence.
- Outside timetabled lessons pupils have few opportunities for extending their experience of music.
- There are some good cross-curricular links with other areas of study.

Commentary

91. At the time of the last inspection standards in music were judged to be below those found in most schools, especially for the older pupils. A key issue was the need for improvement in the arrangements for and content of teaching the subject for the pupils in Years 3 to 6. This is still, to some extent, the case, although there are clear signs of improvement. The improvement has been delayed by changes in staffing, but the subject is now being co-ordinated by an experienced music specialist.

92. The introduction of a new scheme of work is major step forward. Staff are happy to have the guidance and support it provides as many are not confident that they have sufficient expertise in the subject. A programme of staff training has also been instituted to help teachers to use the scheme, to increase their knowledge and give them more confidence. This is currently on-going and will equip teachers and Learning Support Assistants with the skills to help pupils make better progress.

93. Most pupils appeared to enjoy their music lessons during the inspection, although there were some who participated little. In all the lessons a substantial amount of the time was devoted to practical activities, in which many pupils joined enthusiastically. They were achieving well, but from a low base. For example, much of the rhythm experience in which Years 3 and 4 were engaged could

have been achieved by Year 2 pupils. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are developing a good knowledge of simple percussion instruments. They know the names of the instruments and have experimented with different ways of playing them, recognising that the method can change the sound they produce. Pupils of all ages display a good sense of rhythm and when they sing most can do so in tune. However, their skills in singing are underdeveloped.

94. Very few pupils are able to read music, but understanding of note lengths was being developed successfully in Years 3 and 4. In the lessons in which singing was included accompaniment was provided by CD player. Such an arrangement restricts the teacher's flexibility to rehearse separate sections of a song.

95. All the teaching seen during the inspection was well planned and there was a good example of team teaching in Year 6. In one Year 5 lesson a very good warm-up session was conducted before the pupils started singing, but in another lesson there was no warm-up and the singing initially was feeble and lack lustre, even though the pupils knew the song. By Year 6, pupils should be able to engage in part-singing, but with the exception of some additional sound effects in one song, pupils could barely cope with unison singing. Nevertheless, the songs that Year 6 pupils were learning linked very well with work they were doing in history and will have helped their appreciation of the historical context.

96. In Years 3 and 4 all the music lessons are taught by the co-ordinator, who is able to provide piano or guitar accompaniment for singing. In the Year 5 class, where the teacher has some musical expertise, she gives a good lead to singing, but other teachers need support. Consideration should be given to making arrangements for the co-ordinator to teach more classes or for the employment of a pianist to accompany class singing. Indeed, in only two lessons was a Learning Support Assistant helping the teacher, but in those lessons they performed a valuable role in the lesson.

97. Only in one lesson were pupils engaged in composition. Although they tried hard, many were not very accustomed to such activity and struggled to keep together in an ensemble performance that required they all play to a common beat. There was also very little evidence of pupils being given opportunities to listen and appraise music, either in lessons or at other times. More use could be made of music to enhance assemblies and, in a school where there are potential behavioural problems more consideration could be given to the calming role that music can perform. That pupils enjoy music is evident from the numbers who attend the weekly music club: a small group are also learning to play the recorder in Year 2 and a few pupils have started to learn to play musical instruments.

98. The raising of standards in music is a key issue for action. The school should seek to do so by:

- implementing the newly acquired scheme of work throughout the school,
- continuing and extending the provision of staff training to increase teacher confidence and knowledge,
- providing more opportunities for pupils to extend their awareness of musical communication.

Physical education

99. In physical education, one games' lesson was seen in Years 1 and 2, and two gymnastics lessons were seen in Years 3 to 6. The overall quality of teaching and learning in these lessons was good, but no firm judgements can be made about overall provision in the subject. However, discussions with staff and pupils and an analysis of teachers' planning, indicate that the school provides its pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which is designed to promote their physical development and social interaction. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 attend swimming lessons at the local pool in the spring term. Pupils in Year 6 have opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities during their annual residential trip. Very good provision of extra curricular sport such as dance, football, netball and yoga, involving members of staff and outside providers, enhances pupils' learning and their sense of achievement. As a result, a significant number of pupils attain standards above those expected in games by the end of Year 6. The accommodation, both indoor and outside,

and a good range of equipment, allow the subject to be effectively taught. The knowledgeable co-ordinator manages the subject well and provides good advice for teachers. She has identified the need to provide teachers with further training in dance.

100. In the Year 1/2 games lesson seen, pupils were making good progress in ball control using hands and feet. It was evident that a significant number of pupils enter the school with standards in games' skills that are below those one would expect for their age. In the Year 3/4 gymnastics lesson observed, pupils were making very good progress in developing balances within their individual and paired sequence work. A special feature of this lesson was the way the class teachers' very good management resulted in no queuing for apparatus, as a result of which a very good pace to work and learning was maintained.

101. Teachers manage behaviour very well so that all pupils can work together happily and safely. Good use is made of pupil demonstration as a stimulus for improvement. Good examples of this were seen in the Year 6 gymnastics lesson where pupils were sensibly evaluating paired sequences in terms of *quality* and *co-operation*. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons, behave well and work well together.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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