

INSPECTION REPORT

GHYLLGROVE INFANT SCHOOL

Basildon

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114919

Headteacher: Pat Brown

Lead inspector: Michael J Cahill

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 November 2003

Inspection number: 261694

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	173
School address:	The Gore Basildon
Postcode:	SS14 2BY
Telephone number:	(01268) 521987
Fax number:	(01268) 522113
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Michael O'Brien
Date of previous inspection:	21 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves a well-established but under-privileged neighbourhood in Basildon. Because families move within the town's housing association provision, the movement of pupils into and out of the school is above the national rate. When pupils join the school their language and social skills and their readiness to learn are often poorly developed. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are six pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average. As well as a wide range of learning difficulties, the special educational needs in the school include social, emotional, behavioural and physical difficulties.

The school is a very active participant in the local Education Action Zone, gained School Achievement Awards in 2000, 2001 and 2002, and achieved Investors in People status in 2002 and a Healthy Schools Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9505	David Haynes	Lay inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school achieves a good degree of effectiveness and provides good value for money. Good leadership and management promote a community with a pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere in which all are welcomed and valued. The quality of teaching is good and most pupils develop the skills and attitudes needed for success in later stages of education. The school has very strong links with the local community and provides excellent support for parents who wish to help their children's personal development and learning.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- A good start to children's education is provided in the nursery and reception years and there is good improvement in pupils' reading skills as they move through the school.
- Overall standards in English, mathematics and science are below the national average although most pupils make at least sound progress from starting points that are often well below average.
- Very good provision for the personal, social and health education of pupils promotes good attitudes to learning, behaviour, relationships and personal development.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher and good overall leadership and management are successfully raising standards through improving the quality of education provided.
- There is very good provision for the large number of pupils with special educational needs including the high quality contribution made by the team of teaching assistants.
- There are excellent community links and very good links with other schools and colleges.
- There is an excellent level of consultation with pupils and the provision of a very good level of support and guidance for them and their parents.
- The attendance and punctuality of a minority of pupils are unacceptably low.
- The planning of some aspects of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 including how time is allocated to some subjects, the use of the information and communication technology (ICT) suite and pupils' ICT skills in other subjects are under-developed.
- Assessment information is not always accurate or related well to National Curriculum levels in Years 1 and 2 and so cannot be used effectively in setting targets.

The school has achieved a good level of improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Standards of literacy, especially reading and spelling, have been improved through focused initiatives. Planning is now clearer, with more explicit learning outcomes. There is more to do in expressing these in child-friendly language so that assessment and self-assessment can be effectively focused.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	D	D	E	E*
writing	D	D	E*	E*
mathematics	E	D	E	E*

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

From 1998 to 2002 there was a strong upward trend in test results, with around 90 per cent of pupils in 2002 achieving the national expectation in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The results in 2003 represent a sharp fall from this standard. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the year group had a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and there had been an above average number of children, many of whom also had special educational needs, joining classes during the two years of the infant stage. Secondly, staffing difficulties, including long-term illness, meant that each class had at least three teachers during the year; most of them were not experienced in Year 2 work. The present Year 2 had consistent teaching in Year 1 and

standards in key areas such as reading and mathematics are in line with national expectations, hence, it is expected that national test results in 2004 will be similar to those achieved in 2002.

The achievement of most pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, given the low attainment on entry. A growing proportion of pupils have special educational needs and they often achieve well as a result of very well planned and delivered support. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language are fully included in all that the school offers, also benefiting from very good support.

Provision for pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The school is successful in raising the self-esteem of most pupils; this has a positive effect on their attitudes towards learning. Attendance and punctuality are much worse than they should be because of the lack of co-operation by a small number of parents.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality education for all its pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. There are also strengths in developing reading and spelling skills and investigative work in science. Teachers expect pupils to behave well and provide good guidance and encouragement; teaching assistants give very good support. The use of assessments to set targets is not always accurate or well related to National Curriculum levels. Pupils develop basic skills well and become confident of their ability to learn, persevering well and taking increasing pride in their work.

The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on developing basic skills and meets pupils' needs well. It is very well enriched through visits, visitors and a good range of extra-curricular activities including sports clubs. There are some weaknesses in the allocation of time to subjects and in the use of ICT resources. Pupils benefit from high quality care, support and guidance and from the excellent links with the community, very good links with other schools and colleges and the school's membership of the Education Action Zone.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and other key staff provide strong leadership focused on raising the achievement of all pupils through improving the quality of education provided; the headteacher's personal leadership and vision for the school are very good. The governing body provides good support and challenge and is making an increasing contribution to shaping the development of the school. The school runs smoothly; teaching assistants have provided valuable stability and security during the period of high teacher turnover.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are well satisfied with the school, appreciating that their children are treated fairly and taught well. They value the good settling in arrangements and that the school is so approachable. Pupils like their school very much; they value the fact that their views are listened to and acted on.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise attendance levels to match those found nationally;
- maintain the current initiatives for raising standards in English, mathematics and science;
- develop curriculum organisation to maximise the use of ICT facilities and to allocate time appropriately to units of work in National Curriculum subjects;
- improve the accuracy of assessment and its use in setting targets for pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Many enter the school with poorly developed language skills and readiness to learn and by the time that they start on the National Curriculum most have not achieved at least some of the early learning goals appropriate for their age. This has been particularly the case in language and literacy and mathematical development. The indications from the inspection are that current attainment is on track to produce similar results by 2004 to the levels seen in 2002 national tests. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, although boys perform less well than girls, as they do nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in national test results from 1998 to 2002.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills as a result of the extra provision that the school makes.
- Pupils develop their skills in ICT well.
- Poor performance in national tests in 2003.
- Standards are below national expectations in speaking and listening, writing, mathematics and science.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.4 (15.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.0 (13.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	13.7 (16.2)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 51 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The overall trend in national test results at the end of Year 2 from 1998 to 2002 was upwards. Standards in each of reading, writing and mathematics were higher in 2002 than at the time of the last inspection in 1998, very markedly so in reading and mathematics, where they were close to the national average. In 2003, results fell to a very low level, in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. The year group included an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including some with a tendency towards disruptive behaviour, and a higher than normal number of pupils who had joined classes after the start of Year 1. Staff illness and other absences resulted in classes being taken by several temporary teachers, many of whom had no previous experience of preparing pupils for national tests.
2. Inspection evidence indicates that as a result of better staffing and organisation, standards in the Foundation Stage are now rising. During the nursery and reception years, good teaching and provision are enabling children to make good progress in developing their language and social skills and to become confident in their ability to learn. Achievement is good. Despite this, it is probable that the attainment of most children when they enter Year 1 will be below that expected for their age, especially in some of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Children now in the nursery are attaining in line with what is expected for their age and are being helped to lay a secure foundation for future learning.
3. Standards in the classes containing Year 2 pupils are currently average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing and science. In most other subjects, standards are

in line with expectations. There are examples of above average attainment, such as in ICT. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The evidence from their written work is that they have benefited from consistently good teaching in Year 1 that is being continued into Year 2. The daily focused work on reading is clearly leading to improved standards in this aspect of literacy; the efforts to improve writing are handicapped by inconsistency in the teaching of handwriting. The school recognises the need to make sure that as many pupils as possible achieve the higher Level 3 in order that overall results approach the national average. Potentially higher-attaining pupils did not achieve well in last year's national tests; in previous years the proportion of Level 3 grades in reading and mathematics had been at the national average. At present the achievement of higher-attaining pupils is satisfactory except where the targets set for them are insufficiently challenging; their attainment is generally average.

4. The school monitors gender differences effectively and has sought to improve boys' performance in mathematics, through greater use of practical and problem-solving approaches. This was effective in that boys did better than girls in 2003. However, boys did less well than girls in writing; this adds further urgency to the school's plans to encourage formative writing skills.
5. In Years 1 and 2, pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to their peers when taking account of their prior knowledge. They make good progress towards the targets identified for them in their individual education plans. This is the result of very good support from the co-ordinator and class teachers and from the learning support assistants. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, values and personal development are good. Their attendance is poor and punctuality is unsatisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, to their school and to staff and other pupils.
- Very good strategies are in place to promote positive behaviour and raise self-esteem.
- Provision for pupils' personal and social development is very good.
- Pupils develop a good sense of values about social, moral and cultural matters.
- Attendance is well below the national average and a small minority of pupils regularly arrive late.
- Good monitoring of attendance but analysis lacks rigour.

Commentary

6. Most children have limited personal, social and speaking skills when they enter the nursery but they settle well into the day-to-day routines during their time there. The school makes very good provision to develop these skills. Behaviour is well managed and all staff consistently apply strategies to encourage good behaviour and raise self-esteem. They use praise successfully. In addition, a wide variety of playground equipment has been introduced to provide the pupils with activities to engage in during the school day. There have been few exclusions.
7. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic about school and find it a friendly place to be. In spite of the number of staff changes, pupils have good relationships with their teachers and other adults who work in the school. All school decisions take into account the views of the pupils and this is reflected in the positive attitudes of the majority who are happy to be in school; a view confirmed by parents. In discussion with a group of the pupils in Year 2, they were very earnest in their appreciation of a 'Friendship' week that was successfully planned and organised by the school. They obviously gained a great deal from it.

8. Involvement in the school council serves to develop social attitudes and helps pupils to see the advantage of working together for the good of the school. All classes are represented, including the nursery and the pupils take seriously the job to which they have been elected. Minutes are kept and referred to at the fortnightly meetings. The meetings are very well organised and conducted. The pupils are developing an understanding of the role they can play in the decision-making process.
9. Pupils develop well their awareness of right and wrong. They are beginning to have a good sense of values about the social, moral and cultural issues of today's society. A range of visits and visitors contribute well to relevant learning about some of the religions and lifestyles of other peoples.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
139	3	
1		
5		
1		
1		
2		
2		
23		

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

10. Attendance is well below the national average and in the bottom 10 per cent of schools nationally. The punctuality of pupils is below what the school finds acceptable, and the inspection team shares that view. There are good systems in place to monitor attendance and outside support is used effectively but the understanding and analysis of attendance statistics lacks rigour. The school tries hard to improve attendance but the response of parents is disappointing.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	92.3	School data	0.5
National data	94.2	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality education for all its pupils. The leadership of the school strongly and successfully promotes inclusion, the development of pupils' self esteem and the involvement of parents. The overall quality of teaching is good and the curriculum meets pupils' needs well, with very good provision for those with special educational needs. The school provides a very safe and caring environment and keeps good track of pupils' personal development and progress. However, assessments made of pupils' academic progress are often not sufficiently accurate to provide a good basis for target setting. The school's links with the local community are outstanding and of direct benefit to pupils, as are the very good links with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment of the pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a sharp focus on improvement, based on clear and specific learning intentions that the pupils understand.
- Very good contribution by well-briefed and very capable teaching assistants.
- Very good guidance, use of praise and encouragement.
- Good use of questions to aid recall of earlier learning and to extend and consolidate new learning.

High expectations of pupils' behaviour and management of it.

- Some satisfactory lessons still lack sufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils and teachers in these lessons use assessment ineffectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	5 (15%)	14 (43%)	14 (43%)	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.

Commentary

11. The overall teaching of English, including literacy, is good and the school is now developing language and literacy across the curriculum more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. Reading skills are particularly well promoted through short, pacy and focused daily sessions and pupils' learning in this respect is good. In mathematics, including numeracy, teaching is good, particularly with respect to number work, where pupils become confident and competent. The teaching of science is good, with a strong emphasis on developing experimental skills. The teaching of ICT skills is satisfactory and pupils develop a satisfactory level of competence, although there are not enough opportunities for them to consolidate what they have been taught. In the other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. Teaching in the classes for nursery and reception aged children is consistently good, on occasions very good. This is promoting good attitudes to learning and good learning habits; young children display a commendable degree of independence and commitment to their learning.
12. The school is very focused on developing pupils' self-esteem and their view of themselves as successful young learners. To this end teachers and other adults have created a pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere throughout the school, with clear expectations of how pupils should behave. Because the views of pupils are regularly taken into account, most make a positive contribution in their own right to maintaining this working atmosphere in their classes. The good relationships that are established, encourage pupils to become confident and want to improve. In addition, clear instructions also build confidence and enable pupils to sustain concentration and complete the tasks set for them to do.
13. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and is based on detailed assessments. This is seen through the careful planning of lessons, the match of work to the ability of each pupil and the individual preparation of resources to support their work. The school has invested considerably in support staff. They are very well deployed and have a considerable influence in guiding the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that pupils who are learning English as an additional language are fully involved in lessons.

14. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is a strong feature of many lessons, based on good joint planning and very good working practices. In many lessons, teaching assistants are as mobile round the classroom as the teacher, acting on their own initiative within the overall lesson framework. This is making very good use of the considerable expertise available.
15. Many features of the better teaching observed were evident in a lesson on two-dimensional shape with Year 1 pupils. The teacher displayed and shared the learning intentions with the class and revised what they already knew through well-focused questions, using the key language correctly and expecting the same from the pupils. Learning was helped by the fact that key words, for example 'corner', 'straight', 'side' and 'curved' were prominently displayed. Shapes on a whiteboard were used well to provide a visual focus. Sorting tasks were set at three levels of difficulty to provide appropriate challenge for all, with lower-attaining pupils benefiting from direct support from a teaching assistant who took them for a shape recognition walk. Because the practical work was pitched at the correct level for them, pupils engaged well with the work, collaborating well and completing it
16. Teaching was less successful when assessment of what pupils already knew was not accurate and the match of work to learning need was not accurate enough for some pupils, often the potentially higher attainers in Year 2. The school has had many changes of staff recently and there is a lack of experience in assessing to National Curriculum levels. As a result, although the school uses appropriate software to track progress and aid the setting of targets, because some of the assessment data that is input is inaccurate, the individual targets generated are often too easy for some pupils. The school recognises the need for staff training in this respect and there are plans to work with colleagues from the local education authority in order to provide this.
17. The quality of marking is variable. At best, written feedback enhances pupils' learning by helping them to recognise their own progress and achievement and enables parents to have a better understanding of the school's work. However, in other cases marking consists largely of praise, sometimes excessive, without it being made clear what is good about the work that makes it so praiseworthy. Focused marking is not making the contribution it could to raising standards. There were some good examples of the use of homework to reinforce and extend learning, including regular reading at home and the research on topics studied in school such as Diwali.

The curriculum

Provision for the curriculum is satisfactory. Provision for enrichment opportunities is very good. The quality of accommodation is good, and of resources very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage provides a broad curriculum of high quality.
- The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is broad and balanced, with a strong emphasis on English; however, there are weaknesses in the time allocation to some subjects and in the use of ICT.
- Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) promotes pupils' personal development very well, motivating effective learning.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Recent initiatives to involve parents have been very successful.
- Resources and accommodation are of a high standard, particularly the quality of support staff.
- There is a lack of opportunities in the arts, especially the multicultural aspect, in out-of-school activities.
- Frequency and nature of staff changes has a detrimental effect on curriculum development.

Commentary

18. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils that fully meets statutory requirements and takes account of the national guidance for the Foundation Stage. This includes the implementation of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The quality of the newly introduced curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is high, ensuring that the youngest pupils in the school are well prepared for the next stages of learning. For older pupils, initiatives to improve the teaching of national strategies for English and mathematics have had a successful impact on the quality of learning, and particularly on standards in reading. The curriculum includes the expected range of subjects, with adequate time given to each across a school week. However, class timetables are adhered to too rigidly in some of the creative lessons such as art and design, limiting pupils' opportunities to complete tasks and build up key skills in a coherent way. Senior staff monitor how effectively the curriculum is taught in the core subjects, but a sharper focus is needed to ensure that pupils gain as much as they can from the foundation subjects. The use of the ICT suite is under-developed as is the use of pupils' ICT skills to support and extend learning in other subject areas. However, pupils are well prepared to move on to the junior school
19. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they have full access to the curriculum. Class teachers and learning support staff are very well aware of individual needs and pupils who need additional support are identified early. The pupils' individual education plans are well written; the targets are specific and measurable, and progress is closely monitored. Class target sheets are prepared weekly by the co-ordinator in order to monitor the pupils' progress. Lessons are effectively planned to ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to make progress. Adjustments are made to accommodate the needs of pupils with disabilities, and targets are set for pupils' achievement that cater specifically for their requirements. The headteacher keeps track of the progress of the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language and makes sure that provision matches their needs.
20. The school provides very good enrichment of the curriculum through clubs, visits and visitors. There is a good range of out-of-school activities and clubs, both for pupils and for families. Most of these focus on sport, such as football sessions run by Arsenal football club, but learning is also enhanced by appropriate visits to local amenities and by visiting specialists. Parents are involved in after-school family sport, linking with local secondary schools and colleges. However, opportunities to reinforce learning in the creative arts are limited. The frequent changes of staff have affected the provision of such opportunities as art clubs and music sessions.
21. Resources are of very good quality for all subjects in all year groups. Co-ordinators manage them well. The team of classroom assistants provides very good support for pupils' learning throughout the school. All are trained to a high standard, and are very well briefed by teachers to ensure that pupils use their time in school effectively. The school makes every effort to overcome local problems of recruitment and retention of teaching staff. The current staff team is very effective, but the temporary nature of appointments affects provision over time. The accommodation is efficiently organised and maintained, providing well for pupils' learning in all areas except Foundation Stage outdoor play, where there is no covered area to enable children to be outside in inclement weather. There are very good outdoor facilities for older pupils at playtime.
22. Provision for pupils' PSHE and for citizenship is very good. As well as regular lessons in each group, aspects of healthy lifestyles and relationships, the school makes a priority of raising pupils' self-esteem and improving their view of themselves as successful learners.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its pupils; parents are very happy with the level of care and welfare provided for their children. Involvement of pupils in the running of the school is outstanding. Provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High level of support for individual pupils and their families.
- Very good induction procedures to the nursery and reception.
- Child protection awareness is good.
- Outstanding school council.
- Accident records lack detail.

Commentary

23. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very good; all classroom staff and other staff in school are aware of their responsibilities. Lunchtime supervision is very good and there is a very good range of play equipment that the pupils are encouraged to use. The school promotes a team approach that includes the caretaker, office staff and other adults that leads to standards of maintenance and cleanliness that are very good; this instils high values in the pupils who show respect for property and resources.
24. The school cares well for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. Pupils with special educational needs are quickly identified and their progress is monitored and supported thoroughly. Assessment across a wide range of complex needs is detailed and comprehensive, and links with outside agencies are strong. Careful consideration is taken of the needs of all pupils through presenting understandable and practical targets, modifying activities or providing support to meet their needs.
25. Only six pupils have been identified as speaking English as an additional language and of these four entered school with no English, including two children in the nursery. The needs of these pupils are catered for within the planning of the lessons and through mixing with other pupils.

Example of outstanding practice

The involvement of pupils and the seeking, valuing and acting on their views is outstanding.

The school council is excellent and even the youngest pupils have the opportunity to take part. Procedures are formal and time is allowed for each class to discuss any concerns and to record and put their views forward via their elected representative. In meetings, older pupils act as chair and secretary and perform their roles with only minimum intervention from an adult; attendance records and minutes are formally maintained by the pupils. Points raised are noted, discussed with adult help, and outcomes recorded. Time is again allowed for representatives to inform their class. The outcomes of meetings also form part of an assembly. Pupils assist in resolving any dispute between fellow pupils. Pupils' views are valued and they assist in a mediation process.

26. Teachers and other staff know the pupils well and provide a good level of personal support for pupils but the recording of minor accidents lacks detail. Attendance monitoring is good and a very good system is in place for first day of absence contact for any unexplained absence. However, the analysis of attendance data lacks rigour. Pupils feel confident approaching adults in the school and there is a reward system that encourages all aspects of personal development. Induction arrangements for pupils entering the nursery and reception are good and establish a good home-school relationship. A breakfast club and pre-school clubs encourage parental involvement in the personal development of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, and a healthy eating policy is promoted.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has an outstanding partnership with the community, good partnerships with parents and very good links with other school and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School is a focal point for community activities.
- There are very good family learning opportunities.
- Parenting groups provide a very valuable service.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good.
- Poor responses from some parents to the school's efforts to involve them.
- Some details are unclear in written reports to parents about children's progress.

Commentary

27. The school provides parents with a good level of information about the activities of the school. The annual report on pupils' progress includes levels for English, mathematics and science but no key to ensure the levels can be interpreted correctly. The school works hard to attract parents into school. Parents are welcome in school and they appreciate the open access to staff but none assist in class during the teaching day. Very good family learning opportunities are offered before, during and after the school day. A small number of parents take advantage of these opportunities that include morning or afternoon sessions for parents on parts of the curriculum or reading with their child before school starts. Parents support activities organised by the school but few are actively involved in assisting the school. Courses to help parents to manage their children's behaviour are well attended and much appreciated. There are satisfactory procedures for dealing with any concerns or complaints parents may have but they seldom have to be used.

Example of outstanding practice

Community links are excellent. The aim of the school to embrace the community as a means to enrich learning opportunities is a success.

An enthusiastic community liaison worker is successful in raising interest in the community and obtaining a high level of sponsorship and funding to support the many activities the school provides. Pre-school and after school activities are provided for parents and children, and a full day or half day holiday club is open to all. The school grounds are being improved as part of a community regeneration programme and many activities are open to all members of the community. The school premises are used for a variety of activities by a number of organisations.

28. Links with the adjacent junior school are satisfactory and there is a good exchange of information when pupils transfer. Links with local colleges are very strong and the school provides places for trainee teachers on teaching practice. Support from a local sports college is used effectively to provide pre-school activities to assist the physical and personal development of pupils.
29. Parents are regularly involved in discussions with the class teachers where children have special educational needs and are kept fully informed of the support that their children are receiving. They are involved in regular reviews of the targets set in pupils' individual education plans.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear vision that is shared by all, with a commitment to raising standards.
- The management of special educational needs is very good.
- The leadership and management of English and of the nursery and reception provision are very good.
- Very good commitment to raising community involvement in the school.
- Very good financial management of the school.
- Management of assessment is only satisfactory.

Commentary

30. The headteacher is a very effective leader who inspires others to work alongside her. She makes a positive difference to the climate of the school and has worked successfully on improving pupils' behaviour and on providing a good level of care. The school is facing considerable challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining staff, exemplified by the lack of suitable applicants for the post of deputy headteacher. The headteacher has a very clear vision and understanding of the needs of the school, but is often frustrated by the lack of interest shown when recruiting staff. However, she remains positive and determined to work on the problems to improve recruitment and retention of staff. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.
31. The leadership and management of English and of nursery and reception provision are very good. There is a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and the necessary improvements. Good initiatives are in place to raise standards. For example, planning in the nursery and reception classes has been modified and structured to follow national guidelines. These co-ordinators provide good role models for other staff. Over the last year and more recently, co-ordinators new to post have been well supported to develop their management skills.
32. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good: the co-ordinator provides good leadership, advice and organisation. The teaching staff collaborate well and make good use of her expertise and of the materials that she provides to offer good support to those with special educational needs within the classes. Statutory requirements are fully met, and the inclusion of all pupils with special educational needs is very good.
33. Governance of the school is good. Governors have a good understanding of the nature of the school and its strengths and weaknesses: they are supportive and challenging. There is a strong commitment to working with the community, including providing support for parents through specific courses. The governor responsible for financial management makes a major contribution to strategic financial planning. The school currently is operating a deficit budget. This is attributable to the withdrawal of funding for the unit for children with a hearing impairment, although the school had continuing contractual obligations to honour. There are appropriate plans for returning to a balanced budget.
34. The school has made good progress on dealing with the key issues from the last inspection. The staff performance management system is well established and plays a positive part in raising standards. The management of assessment is satisfactory. However, it needs to be re-evaluated in order to identify weaknesses to help the school to define its plans for improvement and from which effective action can be taken. School funds are well managed.

The school uses its funds well for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. It makes sensible spending decisions and reviews the benefits appropriately. The finance governor uses his expertise profitably for the good of the school, ably supported by the office staff.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	446,900	Balance from previous year	75,473
Total expenditure	533,626	Balance carried forward to the next	(11,253)
Expenditure per pupil	3067		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

What is the effectiveness of community provision?

Links with the local community and the provision made by the school to support parents and the community in bringing up their children are excellent. The school offers a wide range of courses and support programmes to meet the needs of parents and pupils, drawing creatively and effectively on local and national sources of funding. The provision makes a vital contribution towards the inclusion of all pupils in what the school offers and is having a positive impact on learning and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good vision and commitment of the headteacher, and very good support from members of the governing body and school staff.
- Very good leadership and management by the community liaison worker.
- Very good family learning schemes and courses that help parents to support their children's personal development and learning.
- Very good links with other schools and educational institutions.

Commentary

35. The headteacher recognises that in order to deal with the low attainment the school has to raise the expectations of parents, many of whom did not voluntarily continue their own education and did not develop a good range of parenting skills before having children. Most parents want to help their children to learn and to manage their behaviour in productive ways but do not have the skills to do so. In order to attempt to break the circle of underachievement the school has taken a wide range of initiatives designed to involve and empower parents. These include the Family Club whereby parents and their children can play and work together for the hour before school starts, including spending time reading together in the classrooms. Parents of children in the reception class clearly felt welcome and comfortable as they read with their children or looked with them at displays in the classroom.
36. The community liaison worker plays a pivotal role in translating ideas and vision into practice. She has successfully sought core funding through the Education Action Zone and the New Opportunities Fund and attracted business sponsorship for particular projects. Among the particularly significant projects is the parent group, led by a very experienced and well-trained teaching assistant, that focuses on managing children's behaviour. Feedback to the inspection team from parents who had attended this twelve-week course was very positive.
37. Parents and other members of the community are working within the Community Regeneration Programme to develop the playground; this work is proceeding with pace and

imagination. Many events are staged to promote involvement of other members of the community as well as parents, such as after-school and holiday clubs, car boot sales organised by the friends of the school and cinema nights. The school plays a vital role as a meeting place and forum for the local community.

38. Successful partnerships with other educational institutions include fund raising for the British Heart foundation, organised with support from students of the local sports college. Collaboration has also taken place with the local adult education centre that enabled parents and grandparents to make props to illustrate stories – which they told to the assembled school. Parents also appreciated the opportunity to develop their own computer skills through a similar collaboration.
39. Through its efforts to serve its community the school has rightly gained considerable commitment from the growing number of those who have engaged with its work. It was obvious during the inspection that people feel welcome in the school and that their contribution is valued.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

40. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly for reception children in the mixed-age class. Only half the children currently in the reception classes have previously attended the school's nursery class; a few have had no pre-school education. Many of the current reception children attain below the expected levels for four-year-olds, and are unlikely to achieve all the early learning goals before they move to Year 1. The nursery children attain expected levels for three-year-olds in most areas of learning.
41. All three teachers in the Foundation Stage are new this term. Under the very good leadership of the new co-ordinator, they have worked very closely with the team of excellent support staff to implement a newly designed curriculum that focuses appropriately on the needs of the children. As a consequence, children achieve well. The teaching is good and often very good. The excellent interaction between adults and children throughout each session ensures that children make full use of their time in school. The good progress they make is carefully checked and recorded.
42. The accommodation is spacious and used to good effect. The secure outdoor area is available to all Foundation Stage children throughout each session on dry days, but the school still lacks a covered area for outdoor activities at other times. New systems for using the outdoor space are proving to be very effective in enhancing children's learning. A recent initiative, to involve parents and the local community in developing a more exciting and stimulating environment outside, has been amazingly successful in a very short time. Resources are good overall, but there is no provision for children to learn to climb and balance safely.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of good, often very good, teaching and the excellent role models provided by members of staff.
- Children are secure and confident. They know the routines well, and respond to high expectations for taking personal responsibility.
- Good behaviour management ensures that children know the rules in a climate where everyone is 'special'.
- Children lack opportunities to develop confidence in balancing and climbing activities.

Commentary

43. The personal, social and emotional development of the current nursery children is at the level expected for three-year-olds. After less than two months in school, most are able to conform easily to the high expectations set by the staff, and behave well in all circumstances. They know the routines for each session, and take pride in organising their own belongings for outdoor activities, or taking orders for drinks at snack time. They take care of each other during boisterous play sessions. Each activity is greeted with enthusiasm and eager co-operation. Most children show good concentration in the calm and purposeful atmosphere.
44. Although many reception children also attain the expected levels, a significant minority find it hard to behave appropriately. Adults deal very effectively with any transgressions, ensuring that children know the consequences of their actions and that they learn from this day-by-day. The cohesive teamwork of the staff is underlined by the excellent relationships they have

forged with each other and the children; this provides a security and warmth that underpins the learning environment throughout the Foundation Stage. Everyone is treated with courtesy and respect. The impact on children's learning is already evident. Most children are likely to achieve the early learning goals in this area by the time they move to Year 1. However, there are limited opportunities for children to develop a sense of caution for themselves. There is little climbing or balancing equipment where children might take risks safely and further develop their confidence.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults take every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening skills.
- Parents' involvement in reading and writing is effective.

Commentary

45. Teachers and support staff use talk to good effect throughout each session; the quality of teaching and learning is good. Children know that they must listen and respond, and do this well in all classes. No opportunity is missed to reinforce language skills and to extend learning so that vocabulary and concepts grow. Nursery children talk about their own experiences, following a routine that encourages them to listen to each other and take turns. Bonfire Night parties were particularly stimulating, and recall was enhanced by a nursery nurse using her digital photographs to capture the delight of the firework party, so that children could successfully describe the colours and shapes they saw and how they felt.
46. Reception children's attainment levels are generally below expectations in this area of learning, but they are making good progress and achieving well. Reception children were poised and confident when acting out a conversation between Guy Fawkes and the king after the class had listened to the Gunpowder story. There are many good role-play opportunities in all classes, where children successfully use language skills in their imaginative games. Effective adult intervention contributes well to this, such as when the reception teacher became a policeman who was checking out a problem. Learning was extended well by the use of different vocabulary and some suitable questions.
47. Children make steady progress in developing early reading skills. Most reception children have already learned a few letter sounds, and higher-achieving pupils read sentences in familiar books without help. Parents have recently become closely involved in helping children, by spending a short time looking at books with their child on arrival at school each morning. This initiative is already proving effective, as parents are asking for more information about their child's reading progress, so that they can help when reading or library books are taken home. Most children recognise their own name or symbol, and several in the reception classes write their own names legibly. However, attainment levels overall in this area are likely to be below those expected for children of this age by the end of the reception year, in spite of some good teaching.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff plan a wide range of appropriate activities to support learning, enabling children to achieve well.
- No opportunity is missed to promote children's mathematical learning.

Commentary

48. Every opportunity is taken to count or to use numbers. The pedal cars in the outdoor area are all numbered on the back, and each has a similarly numbered parking bay; children are learning to match the numbers accurately. Most children can count to five, and the highest achievers are beginning to recognise first, second and third as the class lines up. Sand play includes counting scoops into Balti dishes, and overall good teaching ensures that mathematical language such as is used regularly in every activity. Children make patterns with colours, and learn about symmetry in butterfly pictures. Reception classes make good use of the interactive whiteboard as they build rockets with the shapes they have named. Large plastic coins help children to learn about money, although experience of shopping is limited. Although progress this term is good, attainment in this area of learning is generally below expectations, and only the higher-achieving children are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the summer. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

49. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on provision or standards, but teachers' planning, portfolios of work and classroom displays indicate that this area of learning is suitably taught, and that children are given appropriate experiences.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of activities is offered daily to encourage good physical development, with effective adult supervision and guidance.
- Lack of suitable climbing equipment limits opportunities.
- Lack of covered outdoor space reduces the use of wheeled toys on wet days.

Commentary

50. Children's attainment in both year groups is at the expected levels. The daily sessions of outdoor play on dry days give all children a variety of opportunities to help them to develop an understanding of how their body moves and to control their movements in the space available. They make good progress in this, as they ride wheeled toys, or run along the pathways, following the directions of chalked arrows. Adults are always there, giving suitable advice to extend learning or maintain safety, and to help children make that extra physical effort. Children learn the language of direction, and this is reinforced during lessons in the hall. Although they show good control of body movements, there are no opportunities for children to check that out on climbing or balancing equipment. Their awareness of each other and of space is only tested on the floor, which gives limited opportunities to develop an understanding of their body image. There are many good opportunities provided for children to learn manipulative skills such as cutting-out leaf shapes or decorating their fireworks with glitter. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and children's achievement is satisfactory.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many creative and artistic opportunities offered every day.
- The good role-play provision in each class links well to other areas of the curriculum.

- Very good adult involvement in all creative activities ensures that children make the best use of these opportunities.

Commentary

51. Art makes a strong contribution to children's learning and the creative skills of the staff are put to good use in displaying children's work. Standards are at the nationally expected levels for Foundation Stage children and their achievement is good. Teaching is often very good, enabling children to make good progress right from the start. Children have plenty of opportunity for personal expression in painting and model-making activities, with adult guidance and encouragement at all times. Teachers and support staff keep check of all that is happening throughout each session, giving children time to make their own mistakes and to think about their finished items, while being readily available to prompt or extend learning. Music is effectively used to stimulate interest and conversation. Children sing rhymes and songs with enthusiasm. Role-play is used very effectively, to nurture imagination and to enable children to act out their own experiences. The doctor's surgery in the reception class, for instance, provided opportunities for some lengthy conversations on 'being dead' and the problems of earache. Most children are likely to achieve the early learning goals in this area by the time they move to Year 1.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The initiative to improve spelling and reading is effective and having a positive impact on the pupils' attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils achieve well; lessons are well planned with clear aims that are shared with the pupils.
- Standards in writing are improving, although handwriting is poor.
- The subject is very well led and efficiently managed.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Standards in writing and speaking and listening are below average.
- Marking does not always give pupils a clear picture of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

52. Standards in English are slowly rising because the school has correctly identified speaking and listening and writing as areas for improvement on the school development plan and appropriate initiatives have been introduced. The 2002 Year 2 test results were below the national average. When compared to schools of a similar make-up, they were below average in reading and well below average in writing. Standards dropped in the 2003 national tests, but look to be in line to improve by the end of 2004.
53. The inspection found that attainment overall was below the national average. However, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils, achieve well across the school when considering their prior attainment. Girls do slightly better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported and every effort is made to provide carefully planned work in order to raise their attainment. The school has worked hard to raise the boys' self-esteem and achievement through introducing several initiatives. For example, specific reading materials and clipboards have been purchased and pads have been put into construction toy boxes to enable the boys to make up lists. Reading is on course to be in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum by the end of Year 2.
54. The school is rightly continuing to target writing for improvement. Until the 2003 tests, results had consistently improved since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory but handwriting would benefit from a planned and structured system in order to improve. For example, the scrutiny of work in Year 2 revealed that many pupils are not forming letters correctly, capital letters are written within words and the crossing out of work spoils its presentation. Marking of the pupils' work does not always give a clear picture of how well they are doing because some teachers' comments are too effusive.
55. Overall, the quality of the teaching is good; it is never less than satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The good teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning and how well they achieve. For example, in Year 1/2, teaching is very effective in helping pupils to learn the initial sounds of letters and letter combinations because clear routines, which are understood by the pupils, have been established. This leads to a high level of involvement from the pupils. The lessons are very well prepared and match the learning needs of all the pupils; there is very effective reinforcement of skills already practised. Good questioning skills probe the pupils' understanding and provide practical opportunities for them to talk about their work. For example, in Year 1, pupils consider the need to follow instructions accurately. One pupil said, *"It matters if the instructions are in the wrong order"*

because you will make the diva wrong." In addition, pupils are encouraged to speak to a partner about particular issues.

56. Successful initiatives and accurate identification of priority areas for improvement ensure that the school moves forward; the overall trend since the last inspection has been one of improvement. For example, Early Reading Research (ERR) has a positive impact on the pupils' spelling and reading, and the use of 'Story Sack' supports and reinforces the pupils' speaking and listening skills. In all year groups the pupils are expected to discuss their ideas and feelings during a specific 'circle' time, while their peers are encouraged to listen to them. However, overall, however, speaking and listening skills are below average.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Language and literacy are beginning to be appropriately developed across the curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The scrutiny of the pupils' past work shows that valuable opportunities are provided in history, ICT and science to record facts, give accounts of experiments and use descriptive writing. For example, in science in Year 2 pupils considered what happens to water and chocolate when it is heated. One pupil wrote, *"The chocolate is runny"*, while another said, *"The water turned to steam and got hotter."* In ICT, pupils in Year 1 experiment with the different fonts and write and print out their names. In history, pupils in Year 2 research about Florence Nightingale and one pupil wrote, *"She is famous because she was a nurse in the Crimean War."* These examples illustrate the range of purposes for which pupils write and their growing competence in sentence construction, spelling and punctuation.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching is good, and pupils achieve well.
- The revised action plan identifies most of what needs to be done to raise standards further; its weakness is the absence of clear target dates and any mention of raising the expectations of potentially higher-attaining pupils.
- There are examples of high quality marking that provide valuable feedback to pupils, but this is not consistent in all classes.
- The new co-ordinator is providing good leadership.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support and extend learning.

Commentary

58. From the time of the last inspection in 1998 to 2002, results in national tests at the end of Year 2 improved to the point where 91 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation of Level 2; in 2003 this proportion dropped to 77 per cent for the reasons noted earlier (paragraph 1). On the basis of the lessons observed and examination of the past and recent work of pupils now in Year 2, standards are judged to be in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement is good. Overall, there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.
59. Pupils in Year 1 have built well on their reception experience; they are confident at filling in missing numbers in the range 1 to 20, and many correctly perform additions by counting on. Higher-attaining pupils use multi-link to add units to tens and units, for example $15 + 3$. All pupils benefit from being provided with worksheets that are clear and uncluttered, with large numerals; almost all make their numerals correctly. During the inspection, pupils made good progress and achieved well in developing their knowledge and understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes, using the correct mathematical language.

60. The past work of Year 2 pupils shows that pupils of all abilities have made good progress in developing their competence in number work, shape and pattern recognition. Most are also confident with simple money based work, recognising coins and being able to make up a given amount. Higher-attaining pupils successfully tackled written money problems by the end of Year 1 while others were mainly correct with picture-based problems. Pupils with special educational needs and the few for whom English is an additional language benefit greatly from the in-class support of teaching assistants; their achievement is often good.
61. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were developing their understanding of odd and even numbers; the work was well matched to those of average and below average attainment but did not provide enough challenge for those of potentially higher attainment. In both of the lessons observed, teaching assistants performed an essential role in making sure that lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs were fully included in the lesson. Work for higher-attaining pupils in one class included the use of ICT to extend sequences and identify them as odd or even; this was appropriately challenging. There was good assessment at the end of lessons to check on pupils' understanding. Overall, pupils achieved well and showed a sound understanding of even and odd numbers.
62. The overall quality of teaching is good. Strengths include the way in which pupils' behaviour is managed and the very good team work with teaching assistants that makes sure that all pupils are fully included in the work of the lesson. In some classes, marking is very good, making it clear to pupils what they have learned and can do and what to do next to improve. Targets in books are a new feature; at present they are not always appropriate because the assessment of where pupils are in their mathematical learning is not as sharp as it should be. As a result, expectations are sometimes set too low for the more able. Despite this, the overall quality of learning is usually good, with pupils developing a good degree of confidence and competence with simple numerical work and acquiring good understanding of the properties of simple shapes. They are successfully encouraged to take care with the presentation of their work, most making their numerals correctly.
63. The co-ordinator, who is new to the school this term, is providing good leadership and has quickly identified many of the areas for improvement in the subject. Staff meetings have been arranged to focus on the weaker areas of the curriculum, notably the use of mathematical language, division, shape and space. She recognises that there is need for all teachers in the infant classes to have a clear sense of the standards expected by the end of Year 2, particularly for more able pupils. ICT based resources are not used enough to support and extend learning, although its use was noted in one of the lessons on odd and even numbers and sequences and there is evidence of greater use in previous years.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Pupils use their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum, especially science, but this rarely features explicitly in teachers' planning. There is scope for developing the extent to which pupils of all levels of ability recognise that the mathematics they are learning has practical applications.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the investigative aspect of the subject and make good progress in recording their results.
- The co-ordinator provides good leadership.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Assessment procedures are not closely enough linked to National Curriculum expectations.

- ICT resources are not used sufficiently to support and extend learning.

Commentary

65. In 2002, 88 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation in science, of whom 29 per cent gained the higher Level 3 - proportions that were in line with national averages. In 2003, results were much lower (see paragraph 1). Evidence from the work of pupils now in Year 2 and from lesson observations indicates that around the same proportion as in 2002 are likely to achieve the national expectation. The average standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained, with good improvement in experimental and investigative work. Achievement is good, overall. Because pupils join the school with low level of literacy, developing their competence at recording their work in science is not well-developed. However, in terms of planning, carrying out and interpreting the results of investigative work higher-attaining pupils achieve above the national average.
66. The science curriculum is planned well and pupils cover the appropriate range of topics, make predictions and undertake investigations from the start of Year 1. There is evidence of early development of pupils' own recording in addition to using worksheets. Pupils have clearly explored thoroughly the topic of plants, correctly labelling parts and keeping a diary as they investigated what plants need in order to grow. Recent work includes animal and human growth. An example of the very good marking noted in the class of Year 1 pupils, illustrates the quality of learning, as well as the quality of feedback to the pupil and her parents: *'(Name of child) could tell me that we get taller as we grow older, but the tallest person is not always the oldest.'* During the inspection, the use of a good range of musical instruments provided a stimulating introduction to investigating how sounds are made. Pupils made good gains, from a low starting point, in their learning; there was a good level of challenge for pupils of all abilities and overall achievement was good.

In Year 2, pupils make further good gains in their scientific knowledge and in their understanding of the scientific method. They predict what will happen to water or to chocolate when it is heated, and use a helpful recording frame well when investigating where in the classroom ice will melt quickest.

67. Higher-attaining pupils write in complete sentences and are developing a good understanding of a fair test. Pupils demonstrate their knowledge and understanding more clearly when supported with well-planned recording frames than when they record more independently. Good teaching is promoting good learning and achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, although this is not always evident from written work. In lessons during the inspection, pupils showed a good understanding of why we need water and successfully classified various food items as fruit or vegetables or meat or sugary food. Work was linked closely to the school's agenda of promoting a healthy lifestyle.
68. Teaching is good, based on good subject knowledge and the promotion of an investigative approach. Pupils' learning is good, especially when they refine their knowledge and understanding well in oral work, led by good questioning by teachers. Good efforts are made to improve independent written work through the initial provision of good writing frames and models. Pupils' learning is enhanced through the links made with other areas of learning, including health education and through the promotion of literacy skills.
69. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and has rightly identified improving the extent to which assessment is based on clear learning intentions and linked to National Curriculum levels as a key priority. Resources are generally good but the lack of suitable software and other materials means ICT does not make the contribution to pupils' learning that it should. Overall, there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Too little evidence was obtained to make secure overall judgements on teaching, learning and standards. However, certain aspects of the provision were evident.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examples of work on combining text and graphics are better than expected of pupils in Year 2.
- There is too little regular and planned use of the resources to support and extend learning across the curriculum, although technical problems contribute to this.
- There is not enough focus on non-computer aspects of ICT.
- The computer suite is not fully or efficiently used for organisational reasons.

Commentary

70. Most pupils become competent computer users by the time that they move on to the neighbouring junior school; many have access to computers at home as well as at school and there was evidence of Internet-based research carried out as homework, such as on Florence Nightingale. During the inspection, some pupils from Years 1 and 2 demonstrated that they could confidently and correctly use the mouse and keyboard to convert a horizontal list into a vertical one. At the end of the lesson, pupils correctly gave the teacher instructions on how to close down the program and switch off her computer; others moved round the room switching off the other computers.
71. This lesson demonstrated clearly the organisational problems faced by the school; there are only eight computers in the suite and many classes are approaching 30. Because not all pupils could have access to a machine during the lesson, they have to wait for another occasion to try out what they have been taught. Technical problems mean that the intention of having the class computers running the programs based in the suite has been frustrated.
72. The suite has the benefit of recently obtained equipment including an interactive whiteboard, data projector and a laptop. This is good provision, but it is not yet being fully utilised; the room is often empty. There is no co-ordinator for the subject at present although the headteacher, with the very valuable support of one of the teaching assistants, is effectively maintaining the profile of the subject; they are clear about what needs to be done to improve matters. The recent introduction of assessment portfolios in each class is a useful advance. The present focus of making teachers and pupils more aware of the non-computer ICT resources and their uses is also well judged.
73. Where the school has focused on the use of ICT the outcomes in terms of pupils' work have been good. For example, pupils responded to Friendship Week with poems and drawings, many combining text and graphics. A high proportion of the work by Year 2 pupils was above expectations for their age in terms of layout, use of borders and frames, font choice and size, use of bolding and importing clipart. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. During the inspection there were a few examples of the use of ICT resources to support learning, such as in mathematics, geography and history. The lack of a section for possible ICT use on the school's lesson planning sheets means that some opportunities are being missed. The organisational difficulties related to access to the suite and technical difficulties with the use of appropriate software on the class-based computers are obstructing development in this area.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Provision in history and geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- There is no formal assessment system for history or geography.

Commentary

75. Insufficient evidence was collected to judge the quality of teaching and learning in history and geography. From the evidence available in the scrutiny of a small amount of pupils' past work, discussion with a group of pupils and the co-ordinator and observation of lessons, the standards of attainment are in line with what is expected nationally of pupils by the end of Year 2. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. In the lessons observed, teaching was good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory.
76. The examination of pupils' past work shows that there are good links to literacy within some lessons. For example, Year 2 pupils recount the life story of Florence Nightingale, while Year 1 pupils label appropriate clothes to be taken by Barnaby Bear on holiday to a warm country. There are some examples of ICT being used effectively to support learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 researched information about India on the Internet and were well supported by a learning support assistant.
77. Visits to places of interest and specific weeks that focus on learning about the culture, customs and lifestyles of countries in some way associated with the pupils attending the school, make a good contribution to the pupils' learning. For example, the pupils have experienced and benefited from Turkish, Australian, Chinese and French weeks. From discussion with a group of Year 2 pupils, they obviously enjoyed learning some French words during French Week and spoke enthusiastically about using a map on a school visit to find different shops. Visitors to the school further enhance the curriculum.
78. The subject is appropriately led and managed, although as the subject leader has only taken over in the last four weeks, it is too soon to judge the impact of her expertise on history and geography. There is no formal assessment procedure to gauge the progress of the pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assemblies make a good contribution to the pupils' learning.
- Good use of speakers and visitors.
- Pupils apply what they learn from different world religions to their everyday lives.
- There is no formal assessment system.

Commentary

79. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed programme of work for Essex schools. This judgement is gleaned from the evidence available in the scrutiny of a small amount of pupils' past work, talking to pupils in Year 2 and discussion with the subject leader. This indicates that pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school.

80. Not enough evidence is available to judge the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school as only one lesson was observed in Year 1/2. In the lesson seen, teaching was good and pupils learned much about the Hindu festival of Diwali. Discussion with pupils in Year 2 reinforced this sound knowledge and understanding, as they were able to recall a great deal of what they had learned about the subject. For example, the pupils said, *"They have fireworks and presents: they clean the windows and put decorations up and make Diwali cards."*
81. Pupils appropriately learn about other world faiths through well-planned cultural weeks. They have very valuable opportunities to experience the customs associated with countries such as China, Turkey, India and Australia. Assemblies make a good contribution to the subject, such as when a knowledgeable speaker presents the information about Diwali through the good use of artefacts, the beautiful delivery of the story of Rama and Sita and the very effective use of puppets that are projected on a screen.
82. The subject leadership and management have very recently been taken over by a newly appointed co-ordinator. Therefore it is too soon to evaluate the impact on the subject. There is no formal assessment procedure to gauge the progress of the pupils.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

83. One lesson only was seen in each of the three subjects of art and design, physical education and design and technology. No lessons were seen in music. It is not possible therefore to make a firm judgement about provision and standards in any of the subjects. However, discussions with co-ordinators and pupils, scrutiny of displays and pupils' work, and observation of assemblies indicate that pupils experience a range of interesting and appropriate activities in all areas. Currently there are no effective systems in place to record pupils' progress in the development of key learning in these subjects.
84. It is clear from teachers' planning and from work displayed on walls that pupils have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in **art and design**. Pupils in Year 2 discuss ideas well, and are able to use their imaginations to create a basic design for a collage to represent Bonfire Night. Throughout the school, pupils show good observational skills, which they use well in other areas of the curriculum. Although the art curriculum is not as rich as it was at the time of the last inspection, there are adequate opportunities for pupils to build up their skills. They have good attitudes to the subject, and take pride in their work. However, opportunities to reflect on and improve the quality of finished products are limited. Sometimes pupils have too little time to complete planned tasks while enthusiasm is at its height, because of a lack of flexibility in timetabling.
85. Younger pupils have designed and made a variety of appealing hand and finger puppets in **design and technology**. The skills they learned in that activity are put to good use in Year 2, when they produce a multi-coloured coat for Joseph. Again, there is not always sufficient time to complete the planned activity, and this limits pupils' opportunity to build up knowledge in a coherent way that will enable them to retain the information for future use. The planned units of work that teachers follow as a curriculum are more about the activity than about learning useful skills. The current lack of assessment information hinders progress, because teachers are not able to plan to support individual needs.
86. In **music**, pupils sing enthusiastically and keep a tune well. They enjoy weekly singing assemblies, when they use tuned and untuned percussion to accompany their wide repertoire of hymns and songs. Many keep a reasonable beat. Older pupils are able to moderate their voices according to instructions, and to respond to instructions about pitch and duration. There are plans to improve the provision for pupils to learn about composing music, and notation; this will enhance standards appropriately.

87. All classes are timetabled for a daily fifteen-minute session of **physical education** in the hall, as well as regular physical education lessons. Local authority advisers have recently suggested some effective changes to the provision that have raised the profile of the subject and improved pupils' opportunities. Pupils in Year 2 show good control of their movements and are developing satisfactory co-ordination skills when working with partners on ball-control. This learning is enhanced by some good out-of-school activities. A local Sports College and the coaching staff of Arsenal Football Club augment the provision for both boys and girls, by running skills' training sessions and Skipathons. Parents are able to get involved in family sports activities, where everyone plays games together. Pupils whose physical development might benefit are given access to the 'Gym Trail' for short periods during the morning, with good support and guidance from adults. All these activities are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to exercise.
88. All co-ordinators have been appointed very recently. They show commitment and enthusiasm in their role, and all have good subject knowledge. Their plans to improve provision and raise standards are appropriate, and have been linked effectively to the school development plan.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHEC) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The promotion of PSHEC is embedded in all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- The school is active in promoting healthy lifestyles, as demonstrated by the recent Healthy Schools award.
- The school is outstandingly successful in involving pupils, through regular consultation and an exemplary school council.
- The school has achieved increasing success in its efforts to involve parents in this area of their children's personal development.

Commentary

89. There is a well-planned programme of weekly lessons and other opportunities, such as the class council and class discussion times. The youngest children in the Foundation Stage know that they are 'special', and this reinforcement of each pupil's worth is a constant theme throughout all aspects of school life. For example, in lessons during the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 re-visited 'Specialness' when they considered who was special to them. The topic provided a good vehicle for the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as social development through working in pairs.
90. Most lessons are used well to develop pupils' personal, social and language skills; the overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. Pupils in Year 1, for example, while following the travels of Barnaby Bear on a map, have good opportunities for working together and sharing resources. The brisk and focused short sessions on number work and reading make a valuable contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and giving a positive start to the day. This is achieved through reinforcement of set routines and accurate targeting of work so that pupils achieve success and know that their learning has been extended.
91. Underpinning the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles and relationships is the notion that pupils' self-esteem is the prime motivator to success. To this end, pupils are given opportunities to contribute to the development of the school through the fortnightly school council. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their environment, and for what happens to them. The success of this initiative is through the immediate action triggered by pupils' expressed concerns and worries. Serious difficulties are resolved through discussion systems that aid understanding of the effects that actions have, and these are very successful.

Development of the school playground and Foundation Stage garden has been achieved by parents, the community and staff working together to provide exciting and interesting facilities, following the ideas expressed and discussed by the pupils. All adults work hard in an effective team to ensure quick responses to the highlighted problems. Provision is enhanced by the school's recent initiatives to develop the partnership with parents.

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	2
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
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).