

INSPECTION REPORT

BASILDON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Upper Basildon, Reading

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 109949

Headteacher: Margaret Richardson

Lead inspector: Judith Charlesworth

Dates of inspection: 11th – 13th October 2004

Inspection number: 266379

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 3 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 108 FTE

School address: Beckfords Lane
Upper Basildon
Reading
Berkshire
Postcode: RG8 8PD

Telephone number: 01491 671 445
Fax number: 01491 671 669

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Julie Connell

Date of previous inspection: 1st March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Basildon school is smaller than most other primary schools. Twenty six children attend the nursery in the mornings, including many of Reception age. Some of these children phase in to the Year 1 class each term, first for the afternoons and then full-time, according to their age. Nursery-age children are admitted as the space becomes available. The number of pupils in year groups varies from year to year, and currently ranges from nine pupils in Year 6, to 19 in Year 2. Most classes, therefore, have mixed age groups. Gender balance is uneven in different year groups too, with 84 per cent of nursery children being girls, and 73 per cent of Year 3 being boys.

The majority of pupils come from the local area, which is advantaged. However, the school attracts a number from out of area, due to its small size and reputation for provision for both high attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. More pupils than average leave and join the school

at other than the usual times, so fewer than expected have been at Basildon for all of their school life. Almost all the pupils are of white British heritage; five per cent are of other white heritage, and one per cent is black. No pupils have English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average overall, although the school has above average numbers with special educational needs, and well above average numbers of pupils with Statements of their special educational needs. These pupils tend to join Basildon from other schools. Their main difficulties are specific learning difficulties; speech and communication difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and autism. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark (2003); the Healthy Schools Silver Award (2003) and the Investors in People Award (2002, renewed 2004.)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage; science; art and design; geography; history.
9121	Heather Danpure	Lay inspector	
25778	Andrew Hicks	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology; design and technology; music.
34100	Zena Connolly	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English; personal, social health and citizenship education; religious education; physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	17
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Basildon is an **effective** school. It provides a good quality of education and pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, and well in Years 2 – 6. Leadership and management are good and, with a higher than average budget as expected for a small school, Basildon gives **satisfactory value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The ethos, underpinned by very good provision for pupils' personal development and good support and guidance, is very good; this leads to pupils' very good attitudes, relationships and behaviour;
- Although satisfactory, provision in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is not as good as in the rest of the school;
- Provision for high attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is very effective;
- Partnership with parents is very effective, and they think very highly of the school;
- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in Years 2 to 6 is good;
- The head teacher's leadership is good, and she is leading the school forward effectively;
- The school does not do enough to prepare pupils for life in our multicultural society.

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been **satisfactory**. Most of the weaknesses identified have been adequately addressed, and some have improved considerably, such as reading standards, the curriculum for Years 1 – 6 and communication with parents. Some improvements have yet to be achieved; in particular, provision is not stimulating enough in the Nursery and provision for pupils' cultural development is not good enough.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	B	D	A	A
Mathematics	B	E*	A	A
Science	C	E	B	C

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. The Year 6 National Curriculum test results do not give a true picture of the school's position in relation to all schools or similar schools across the nation, because of varying numbers in small year cohorts (11 pupils in 2003, 19 in 2004 and 9 due in 2005;) above average numbers of pupils with significant special educational needs; and above average numbers who join Basildon late in their school career with below average attainment for a variety of reasons. These details cannot be taken into consideration when making national comparisons, and the results of just one pupil can dramatically affect the grade given; for example one pupil equated to 9 per cent in 2003. However, the high standards attained in the most recent tests reflect a larger, more stable and homogenous cohort, and the school's drive for improving achievement. Taken individually, pupils in Years 2 to 6 achieve well.

Children enter the nursery with above average skills, and attain the Early Learning Goals in most areas of learning well before the expected time of the end of their Reception year. However, achievement in the Foundation Stage is only satisfactory, because of improvements needed in the quality of teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment. Achievement is also only satisfactory in Year 1. Standards in Year 2 are currently around average in writing and mathematics, and above average in reading and science. Pupils' personal qualities are **very well developed**, and their attitudes, behaviour and relationships are all very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attendance is above average and punctuality to school is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The quality of teaching, and the learning that follows are **good** overall. Pupils are well cared for and are given good support, advice and guidance throughout the school. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, because the Foundation Stage curriculum requires improvement to take account of children's advanced skills. There is a very good range of additional activities and experiences that enrich the curriculum for the pupils. The school's accommodation is satisfactory, and well resourced. Links with the community and the Federation of small schools, to which it belongs, are good, and enhance the quality of education provided.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good** overall. The leadership of the head teacher is good, as is that of other key staff. She understands the strengths and weakness of the school and has put strategies into place to improve it; due to its small size, however, these have not always had an immediate effect. Management and governance are satisfactory. Insufficient use is made of children's performance data in the Foundation Stage to inform teaching, planning and staff performance management, but it is well used elsewhere in the school. Not all governors have a full understanding of their corporate role and responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Almost all parents are satisfied with the school although a very small minority is concerned about the number of pupils admitted with special educational needs. The majority, however, recognise and accept the inclusive nature of the school. Although information provided for parents is of high quality, a few parents would like even more information on how exactly to help their children at home, but overall, they are happy with all that the school does for their children. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy lessons. Their opinions are frequently sought and are valued, and there are good opportunities for pupils to share their concerns, in private, with an adult.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in the Foundation Stage and Year 1, and the curriculum and assessment for pupils in the Foundation Stage;
- Improve the provision for pupils' multicultural awareness.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The standards pupils attain, as measured by the National Curriculum tests in Year 6, vary from year to year in relation to the makeup of the small year groups. The national test results were much improved in the 2004, reflecting a different and larger cohort, and the effect of a focus on improving achievement. Pupils' work shows that standards are currently a little above average. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception years) and Year 1, and they achieve well in Years 2 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well in English, mathematics and religious education in Years 3 – 6, and in science throughout the school;
- Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well;
- Achievement in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 should be better;
- Standards in speaking and listening are above average throughout the school.

Commentary

1. When compared to the national figures, Basildon's National Curriculum test results do not give an accurate picture of trends in pupils' attainment over time. Year groups are often small, and statistical data is therefore unreliable. The number of pupils with special educational needs in each year group varies considerably; for example, five per cent in the current Year 2, and 44 per cent in the current Year 6. A greater number of pupils than average join Basildon beyond the start of their school career, and these pupils do not gain maximum benefit from the quality of education provided at this school.

2. In 2003, there were 11 pupils in the Year 6 cohort. Three of these pupils arrived in Basildon just a few months before they sat the tests, and two of them were low attainers; of the other eight, four had special educational needs, including one with a Statement, and only three pupils had been in the school since they were seven. Test results for 2003 painted a bleak picture for the school in comparison to others, but the data could not take these circumstances into account. In fact, examination of individual pupil's progress shows that they achieved well considering their abilities and circumstances. In 2004, however, the year group was larger (19 pupils,) more stable, and with fewer pupils with special educational needs. In addition, the school's curriculum developments to improve pupils' attainment had had a good effect. Consequently, the National Test results show a truer picture, although they must still be treated with caution. Attainment in English and mathematics have improved markedly to be well above average in comparison to all schools (when calculated by average points), with science results being above average. In particular, more pupils than average performed at levels above those expected for their age in all three subjects. The current Year 6 cohort is small (9 pupils), and several have special educational needs. The standards observed in class and in pupils' books are, overall, better than to be expected, and some pupils are attaining high standards. Achievement for the current Year 6 is good.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.6 (26.4)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.9 (23.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.5 (27.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The 2004 National Curriculum test results for Year 2 show improvement in reading, but a decline in writing and mathematic scores; however, once again, the statistical data is not reliable. The cohorts are small overall, and vary from year to year. There are currently 19 Year 2 pupils, only two of whom have special educational needs. In 2004, there were 13 pupils in the cohort, of whom 40 per cent had special educational needs, which affected the results considerably. However, there are additional reasons why test results and current standards are not as high as they could be, and this is because pupils could achieve more in the Foundation Stage and in Year 1. They join the Nursery with above average skills in all areas of learning, and are still above average when they move into their Reception year, and on into Year 1. However, the curriculum and teaching in these year groups is not challenging or vibrant enough. Whilst pupils achieve satisfactorily and clearly make progress, this is not at the same good rate as in Year 2 and above.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (15.6)	15.8 (15.8)
writing	14.8 (15.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.1 (17.3)	16.2 (16.5)

There were 13 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Once in Year 2, staff work hard to build on what the pupils know, understand and can do. Teaching is good; pupils achieve well and gain ground fast. Science for Year 1 and Reception pupils is taught by a Year 2 teacher, and the whole-school drive to improve reading and promote pupils' speaking and listening has maintained their above average skills in these areas. Thus pupils are currently performing better than expected in these subjects in Years 1 and 2. Pupils achieve well throughout Years 3 to 6 due to strong teaching and a good curriculum. The current standards of those pupils in Year 6 who do not have special educational needs in English, mathematics, religious education and science are above expectations for this time of the academic year.

5. Staff build upon pupils' above average communication skills as they move through the school. Speaking and listening are promoted in every lesson, and staff stress the importance of listening carefully, and answering what the pupils have been asked in full sentences, using subject-specific vocabulary. The pupils' natural confidence supports this, and they very much enjoy "taking the floor" and talking about a wide range of issues, whatever their age.

6. The school has identified a group of higher attaining pupils who need extra challenge, and careful use of financial resources means that they receive additional support at times and achieve well. They are working at levels well above expectations for their age. Similarly, good organisation, planning, support and curriculum provision enables pupils with special educational needs to have their needs properly met, and they too achieve well - and very well in KS2.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are all very good. Their social and moral development are very good, spiritual development good, and their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with members of staff;
- Behaviour is very good, and pupils are responsible and mature;
- Pupils enjoy their work, and are positive about all that the school provides;
- Provision for pupils' cultural development is not as good as that for their social, moral and spiritual development.

Commentary

7. Pupils' positive attitudes, values and personal development were strengths in the last inspection, and this position has been maintained. Pupils respond very well to staff and are polite and confident when talking to them. The system of "Bubble Time," whereby pupils can request a time for individual discussion with a teacher about a personal issue, is well used, indicating the strength of pupils' confidence in staff. Staff encourage all pupils to take a full part in lessons, and those with the most significant special educational needs are asked to contribute to the same extent as the others, including the very high attaining pupils. The encouragement offered by members of staff - particularly learning support assistants - enables these pupils to be active participants in school life. This gives all pupils a sense of their own worth, and contributes very effectively to their self-esteem and personal development. Pupils are keen to take part in lessons, and school life as a whole. They attend out-of-school activities, with their families where possible, and are proud to take part in community events such as a local music competition. Pupils are comfortable discussing school issues openly and the very successful School Council system, which takes class views forward for discussion, promotes their personal development effectively. In class and at play pupils are mindful of each other's needs. They co-operate well together and support each other effectively in group tasks. For example, a group of three Year 3 and 4 pupils organised themselves to perform one task each in a science investigation into shadows, so making the investigation more efficient.

8. Pupils' behaviour at playtime and during breaks is good. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection, and none recently reported. Any incidents are discreetly and effectively dealt with, and there have been no exclusions in the past year. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good, although some older pupils can exhibit unnecessarily high spirits, which needs careful handling. The pupils themselves are involved in ensuring the smooth running of the school. This contributes very well to the family ethos, and to the pupils' personal development and understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship. Older pupils are given responsibility as monitors and house captains, and members of the School Council (from all age groups) monitor behaviour, sanctions and rewards.

9. Pupils' social and moral development is enhanced by the democratic and caring ethos of the school, as well as by planned teaching and learning, for example through *Circle Time*, when pupils consider a range of issues such as the difference between assertiveness and aggression. Pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now

good. Well planned assemblies, when pupils are encouraged to reflect and respond to their own thoughts and emotions, makes a good contribution to this. For instance, in an assembly on 'The Senses' the pupils were asked to think about how complex and wonderful their bodies are, and to sit and listen quietly to their hearts beating. The pupils responded very well and expressed what they felt in a very mature and articulate way. Opportunities for the development of pupils' understanding of our multi-cultural society are not well enough threaded through the everyday work of the school. Particular foci do celebrate and enlighten pupils; however, this is not backed up by enough of a multi-cultural theme at other times. The nursery, for example, has very few books showing other than white children, or non-European ways of life.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.2
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

10. The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good and pupils learn well overall. The curriculum is satisfactory and pupils are well cared for and supported. The very good links with parents and good links with the community support learning effectively.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. The assessment of pupils' skills and work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Year 2 and above are good;
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is satisfactory overall but is often not exciting or challenging enough;
- Assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge is used well in Years 1 to 6 to inform teaching and planning, but it is not used effectively in the Foundation Stage, where it is unsatisfactory;
- Teaching is well planned and organised to include pupils of all abilities;
- Teachers are rapidly gaining confidence is using interactive whiteboards to enhance both teaching and learning.

Commentary

11. Overall, the quality of teaching is similar to the time of the last inspection, although there have been clear improvements in some weaknesses previously noted, such as the use of reading records.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 24 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	5	9	7	2	0	0

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

12. Teaching in Years 2 to 6 is good, with nearly half being very good or excellent. The best teaching is characterised by a purposeful but relaxed atmosphere in which pupils are free to think laterally to use and build upon their existing knowledge and understanding, and to be independent, working out problems and organisation for themselves. Pupils are well used to this, and very much enjoy the challenge. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson, the pupils' task was to make a circuit that worked a buzzer. They were much more independent than usually seen at this age, and those who had difficulties were skilfully supported by the teacher at precisely the level they needed, and no more. Teachers set the scene well by good explanations and questioning that draws out, confirms and extends what pupils already know. In this way, they also check pupils' understanding, which supports their planning for the next lesson. The most effective teachers demonstrate very good relationships with the pupils; their lessons are interesting and fun, and interactions are warm and supportive, but in no way "soft." The pupils' behaviour is very good because they want to please and to learn, and any over-exuberance is very easily quelled by a look or a quiet word. In less effective teaching, teachers' drive for "perfection" is such that pupils' natural high spirits bubble over, almost in defence, creating lessons that require too much behaviour management. Teachers' marking of pupils' work has shown a great improvement recently, particularly for Years 5 and 6 where it is of very high quality, full and constructive in telling pupils how well they have done and what to do to improve.

13. Throughout the school, teachers use the new interactive whiteboards very effectively to enliven their teaching. Pupils are highly motivated by this approach and, at times, one can see understanding dawning on their faces as they gaze at the images. This supports learning extremely well. On one occasion, Year 5 and 6 pupils came to understand the differences between *biographical* and *autobiographical* writing as the teacher questioned them, and sorted the characteristics of each type of writing into two columns on the whiteboard. Very good use was made of ICT in a science lesson where digital photographs of pupils' work taken during the lesson were displayed on the large screen in the final discussion. Focusing on the work in this way helped pupils to judge for themselves how well they had learned.

14. Teaching for the younger pupils and children does not always support maximum learning, or the development of creativity and problem solving skills. The organisation of the nursery classroom provides a safe and secure, though unexciting, environment for learning. The pupils and children are well cared for, and their natural compliance, good behaviour and interest in learning ensures that they get the most out of their lessons, and so they do make progress in these three years. However, at times pupils and children are not given enough independence or freedom to investigate, and are protected from getting things wrong. Teaching often lacks pace and challenge, and work can be rather dull and repetitive. For example, on one occasion, a class of Reception and Nursery-aged children were doing a counting activity using the interactive whiteboard. This lasted about 15 minutes. The teacher then worked with the Reception children alone, but spent the first half of the session repeating the work that had just been covered, and that they found easy.

15. Children in the Foundation Stage are assessed using the Local Education Authority's scheme, and this provides valuable information about each individual. However, the school does not have an over-view of the children's development, and so cannot identify overall patterns and trends, nor how well individuals are learning over time. Teaching and curriculum cannot, therefore, be adapted to fill in any gaps in children's learning. For example, a quick analysis of the six Reception children's details revealed that all entered the Nursery with well above the expected skills for their age; that in some terms, they made relatively little progress in one or more areas of learning; and that once an Early learning Goal had been achieved, there was no system to record progress until they started work on the National Curriculum in Year 1.

16. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 assess pupils' work thoroughly and keep extensive records of progress in English, mathematics and science.. Pupils take a range of nationally validated tests for English and mathematics at regular intervals. Data from these tests is analysed in depth to show trends and patterns in overall performance and, should the need arise, to investigate the performance of individual pupils. All pupils have individual short term learning targets for English and mathematics. These are well chosen and are reviewed regularly, including by the pupils themselves, so they know exactly how to improve. The school uses assessment information well in planning for pupils' needs, especially in Years 3 to 6, for example in the *setting* arrangements for English and mathematics (*Setting* is the grouping together of pupils of similar attainment for teaching.) Assessment in ICT is, however, unsatisfactory as the system is not yet complete and functioning properly. A group of pupils who are advanced for their age has been identified throughout the school. Good planning and suitably challenging work means that these pupils continue to achieve well. In Years 3 to 6 in particular, the pupils reach high standards. Pupils with special educational needs also have their needs met by careful assessment, clear targets for learning and very good support by teaching assistants.

The curriculum

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory curriculum overall. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and curriculum focus weeks enriches pupils' experiences very well. The schools' accommodation and resources are satisfactory, and the extensive grounds support learning well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage does not sufficiently specify what children should learn once they have attained the Early Learning Goals in any area of learning;
- Subject planning is good but teachers do not exploit links between subjects to best effect;
- The school provides a very good programme of enrichment activities that contribute very well to learning;
- Outdoor facilities are very good and effectively support learning in physical education, science and the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

17. There are sound policies and schemes of work for all subjects and religious education, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The two-year planning cycle ensures that pupils in mixed age classes who stay in the same class for more than one year do not unnecessarily repeat work, and that they build up their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically. Combining the two junior-age classes and splitting them into a higher attaining group and a lower attaining group for mathematics (*setting*) was introduced last year. It helps

teachers to plan more effectively for pupils of all abilities and contributed well to improvement in Year 6 pupils' performance in 2004. The school has successfully implemented a succession of National Curriculum initiatives over the years which, in keeping with national trends of the time, led to planning for each subject separately. The curriculum therefore lost some of its former imagination and creativity, for example no longer exploring thematic approaches. The school is aware of this and plans to re-introduce cross-curricular planning.

18. The curriculum for the Foundation stage does not sufficiently take into account what children should do and learn once they have achieved the Early Learning Goals - which the majority do well before the end of their Reception year. Instead, children follow the Year 1 curriculum – albeit adapted for their age and needs, but nevertheless, not the Foundation Stage curriculum to which they are entitled. The curriculum is not planned as a result of an overall assessment of children's skills and development, nor is their progress properly tracked once they have reached the Early Learning Goals. The position is similar in the Nursery, though to a lesser extent because of the age of the children. The Year 1 classroom is appropriately organised for the Reception children who share it. The nursery makes good use of an adjoining foyer for some activities, including use of the interactive whiteboard. Resources are satisfactory; however, the space available to the Nursery, including some very small rooms, is not used to best advantage to support children's imaginative and creative development.

19. Pupils enjoy a wide range of educational visits and other activities. Because of the small size of the school, all pupils go on most trips to places such as the Reading Synagogue, the National Gallery or the War Museum. Visits from the local Member of Parliament, musicians and others enliven the curriculum and add much interest. Special curriculum focus weeks add good variety and allow pupils to work on more extended projects. Last year the design and technology focus embraced work as diverse as making clothes for a fashion show, constructing waterproof shelters and making kites. French lessons are long established in the school and popular with pupils of all ages. For its size, the school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities such as a school choir and opportunities to take part in seasonal sports. Residential trips, drama and music performances, such as Christmas celebrations, also contribute effectively to pupils' growing independence and their sense of teamwork.

20. The internal school accommodation is satisfactory, but access to some classes, including toilets for pupils in Reception and Year 1, are through another classroom, which interrupts lessons at times. The computer suite is small, with too few computers, but interactive whiteboards in each classroom make an excellent contribution to pupils' understanding. Outside facilities are very good. The wild area, willow maze and large playing field support learning in environmental education and physical education well, as does the secure outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage. The school is well-resourced and deficiencies in the library identified at the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are all good. They make a significant contribution to pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and maturity.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know all pupils very well and provide good care for them in a safe working environment;
- Pupils receive good support, advice and guidance about their work and personal development;
- The school is good at seeking and responding to pupils' views.

Commentary

21. Basildon continues to be the caring and friendly community noted at the time of the last inspection, where staff are sensitive and responsive to the needs of all the children in their care. This helps to give pupils the confidence to learn effectively. The school deals well with the above average turnover of pupils and ensures that those who move in from elsewhere receive equally good care and support as those who have been in the school for a longer time. The very good ethos of care, support and guidance enables pupils with special educational needs to succeed and be confident and wholly involved in school life. The health and safety procedures are good and well monitored, enabling pupils to work in a safe, healthy and stimulating environment.

22. The system of setting targets for pupils and providing opportunities for them to judge the quality of their own work is popular with pupils and effective in helping them to enjoy learning, make good progress and achieve well. *Circle Time* sessions provide good occasions not only for discussion about issues relating to the class, but also for gaining knowledge of wider issues and an insight into the human condition. These, together with freedom for pupils of all ages to socialise together in *Golden Time*, make a significant contribution to the school's inclusive ethos, and pupils' personal development and high degree of maturity. This confirms the school's aim that pupils' personal development is central to its ethos.

23. The School and Class Councils are well established and provide a good opportunity to seek and respond to pupils' views. The outcomes of weekly Class Council sessions, which centre on ideas put in a suggestion box, are taken forward for discussion at the School Council. The School Council is run well by a persuasive group of enthusiastic pupils, who are keen to represent the views of fellow pupils. The system is effective in enabling all pupils to air their views and the school values their ideas and responds appropriately.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between school, parents and carers is very good. Links with the community and the local federation of small schools are good, and those with the main receiving school satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very strong partnership between the school, parents and carers;
- The school provides high quality information for parents and carers;
- Parents and carers make a very significant contribution to the school and pupils' learning;
- Links with the local community enhance the curriculum and pupils' experiences well;

- Links with the local Federation of Small Schools bring benefits to both staff and pupils, but those with the main receiving secondary school have stalled.

Commentary

24. Parents feel welcome in school, and effective two-way communication between home and school has been established. Termly parents' meetings and good end of year reports are welcomed by parents. Their ideas are valued and implemented, such as the before-school story session they run each day for children in the nursery. Where pupils are identified with special educational needs, parents are kept appropriately informed and involved, and are encouraged to work alongside the school to best ensure their child's progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator operates an 'open door' policy and parents know they can approach the school with any problems or concerns.

25. The school provides a very good range of information for parents - in particular, a comprehensive induction pack for new parents. This is important because of the significant number of pupils who transfer into the school from elsewhere. The class newsletters also provide very helpful, detailed information about what pupils will be studying and a range of documents provide advice on how parents can help with homework, reading and mathematics. Nevertheless, some parents would like even more information, particularly on the curriculum and the actual techniques involved in helping their children at home. All the concerns regarding links with parents from the last inspection have been dealt with effectively.

26. Overall, parents make a very significant contribution to the school. Most of the governors are parents, the School Association continues to thrive and to provide many additional items. Some parents help in school and with visits. Many parents contribute to the standards their children achieve by helping them with homework, and generally extending their knowledge and skills through family-based activities.

27. Links with the community are good and enhance the pupils' education. For example, the local vicar takes assemblies, people from the local community talk to children about village history and pupils visit local venues such as art galleries and places of worship. The community benefits from use of the school on occasions; the nursery, for instance, is used every afternoon by a pre-school group and later in the day by an after-school club. Other uses are planned that will help the school achieve its aim of becoming a centre for the village community.

28. The school's membership of the Local Federation of small schools is beneficial in providing joint staff training, joint sports events and last year it organised a joint multi-cultural week. Links with the main receiving school are satisfactory but weaker than they were previously. The school is actively seeking to see them improved.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. Management and governance are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the head teacher is good;
- There is insufficient analysis and use of performance data in the Foundation Stage;
- Members of the governing body do not all have a complete understanding of their corporate responsibility;
- The school is very inclusive and provides equally well for pupils of all abilities;

- Management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and high attainment is very good.

Commentary

29. A new chair and some new members have refreshed the governing body. Members have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school; they are beginning to see how these link with pupils' achievement and their own responsibility in facilitating change and shaping the school's strategic direction. Governors appreciate that they themselves need training and more experience to fulfil their duties more effectively; currently, they do not all have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This has reduced the effectiveness of their collective role as a critical friend to the head teacher – for example in asking the right questions about the standards in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

30. The head teacher has a clear overview of this small school and puts good strategies into place to improve and develop it. These take full account of the latest national initiatives, such as extra support for achievement in English and mathematics. Applications are made for any extra monies that might be available through grants, and finances are effectively and creatively used to support pupils' achievement. The head teacher understands the benefits brought and the difficulties faced by small schools, particularly in relation to the small number of teaching staff. Leadership and management responsibilities are dispersed through the school as far as possible, for example to subject co-ordinators. However, each individual has a number of responsibilities, which cannot be carried out to the same degree. This means that some roles are more effective than others. The head teacher analyses the Year 1 to 6 pupil performance data, and has a clear understanding of why standards are as they are and how to improve them. Support is given to individuals and groups of pupils, for example through *setting* arrangements, and to teachers experiencing difficulties through performance management and additional means. However, this approach has not been taken with the data produced through assessment of children's developing skills in the Foundation Stage. Valuable information about the overall rate and pattern of children's learning, which could have informed curriculum and teaching plans - and staff performance management - has therefore not been gathered. One of the results of this has been a slower rate of learning in children's first three years than in the rest of the school, which has affected the National Curriculum test results in Year 2.

31. The school has a deserved reputation for its inclusive provision and successful small-school ethos. This means that it attracts pupils from out of area (who tend to join the school during their infant or junior years) and as a result, the school has above average numbers of both pupils with special educational needs and those with high attainment. Recognising this, and wanting to give good support to all its pupils, including those who are not part of these two groups, the school has become very adept at meeting individual needs. Provision for the highest and lowest attainers is very well managed by one co-ordinator. Well-constructed individual education plans are written to identify what pupils should learn next, or how they should be extended to attain consistently high standards.

32. Financial resources are used very well to provide teaching assistants who give extra support – particularly, but not exclusively, for the highest and lowest attainers. Their work is managed and closely monitored by the special educational needs/higher attaining pupils co-ordinator. They work efficiently and effectively and provide good value for money. The needs of the other pupils in the school are very well met by other strategies. Work is well planned to match the needs of all pupils, and every individual has their own learning targets in English and

mathematics. These are clearly understood by the pupils themselves and are regularly reviewed and amended with them.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	363412
Total expenditure	350275
Expenditure per pupil	3020

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	6462
Balance carried forward to the next	13137

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

33. The Foundation Stage includes a Nursery class, which operates in the mornings, and provision for Reception aged children who attend the Nursery in the mornings. They join Year 1 pupils during the course of the year, depending on their age. Provision is satisfactory overall.

34. Children join the Nursery with above average skills in all areas of learning. They are very positive about school, and ready to make the most of it. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and the children's skills are still above average when they move into their Reception year. Here, teaching and learning are once again satisfactory, but in neither year group is it always challenging, innovative or vibrant enough. Consequently, it does not support the most effective learning, or the development of creativity and problem solving skills. Children are not always given enough independence or freedom to investigate and work can be rather dull. This is in part because the curriculum does not provide properly for the older children once they have achieved the expected goals in each area of learning. The great majority do this before the end of their Reception year. Children are assessed using the Local Education Authority's scheme, which provides information on an individual basis. However, the data is not collated into a format enabling an overview to be taken, and so the school cannot identify overall patterns and trends, nor how well individuals are learning over time. Teaching and curriculum cannot, therefore, be adapted to fill in any gaps in children's learning. Reception children tend to work with Year 1 on the National Curriculum subjects. Their advanced skills means that they can manage this, but it does not give them their entitlement to the investigation and play-based curriculum to which they are entitled.

35. Both Nursery and Reception children have a safe and secure environment, with very good outside facilities. Children are given good care and support by both teachers and assistants, and this contributes well to their development. Links with parents are good and they are pleased with their children's progress. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are less effective than in the rest of the school. Suitable support has been given to the staff, to help them improve their practice, but gaps in curriculum and assessment have not been well enough addressed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development is well-threaded through everyday work;
- Children are mature, well behaved and very keen to learn.

Commentary

36. As in the rest of the school, the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development is important in both Nursery and Reception, and is central to the positive ethos.

Children achieve well in this area of learning, and the great majority reach the Early Learning Goals well ahead of the expected time. Children are well cared for and supported, and their natural compliance, good behaviour and interest in learning ensures that they get the most out of their lessons. The staff work well together and make expectations of behaviour, work and play practices clear, supporting new children until they feel confident and secure. Children quickly come to understand what is acceptable in which situation, for example in class and when out to play. Children identify and express their feelings, share and co-operate well in both work and play situations. Most can see to their own hygiene needs, and dress and undress for physical activities. Children are confident, often initiating discussions with adults and are very keen to be involved. For example, one Nursery child approached the inspector to show off her written work, and a small group then quickly developed as other children wanted to share in this opportunity too.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills;
- Activities to develop writing skills are not always interesting enough.

Commentary

37. Children's achievement is satisfactory in this area of learning. The majority reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year. Staff listen carefully to what children say which helps them realise that it is important to be quiet and take account of others' views. In one very successful lesson for Reception children, the teacher encouraged voice control by asking the children to "say it out loud" and "say it out soft." The strong emphasis on children's personal development - for example conforming in group situations - supports this further. The staff question children effectively, which extends their ability to speak in whole sentences and use interesting vocabulary. Many children, including the youngest, volunteer information freely, speak well in complex sentences and initiate discussions with friends and adults.

38. The teaching of reading and writing is satisfactory overall. In the Nursery, early reading skills are well promoted in whole-class activities, such as story time, and children learn letter names and sounds quickly. Well-focused activities support their writing development, and children practice writing in a range of contexts, for example writing little "books" about themselves or a list of healthy foods. Some children can read and write some simple words by the time they join Reception, and at this stage of the year, most can do "pretend" writing containing recognisable letters. The book corner is satisfactory, but books are not particularly exciting and do not sufficiently promote children's multi-cultural awareness. In Reception, children continue to make progress, but lessons can be rather dull and sedentary for the age group. In contrast, in a lesson for Reception children taken by a Year 2 teacher, the children were highly motivated by the physical and investigative nature of the activities in which they had to identify the initial sound of the name of an object, make the letter "h" out of play dough and then "write" the letter on each others' backs. By the end of their Reception year, most children can read simple texts and are starting to write short sentences

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching does not always meet the needs of all children in the Nursery/Reception class.

Commentary

39. No lessons in mathematical development were seen in the Year 1/Reception class. One lesson was observed in the other Foundation class, which met the needs of the Nursery children but not those of the Reception children. This was because the work for Reception children repeated what had been carried out with the mixed age class, and did not sufficiently extend or challenge them. The children did not learn as much as they could have done. In addition, children were given a second task that was convoluted, and that they had to carry out one at a time. By the time the first child had got his task “right,” the other five had forgotten what they were meant to be doing. 40. There were no additional resources, such as number cards, to remind them, consequently, most did not gain anything from the session.

41. However, records show that overall, children’s achievement is satisfactory and they generally reach the Early Learning Goals before the end of their Reception year. Children in the Nursery use the language of shape, size and measure in their work and play, and sort objects into categories such as cars or animals. Most can count reliably to 10, and some to 20, which is advanced for their age. The Reception aged children recognise numerals to 10, can count to 20 and more, and understand the concepts of addition and subtraction. A few can do simple calculations in their heads, such as adding on one or two.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

42. No lessons in knowledge and understanding of the world were observed. However, the Nursery environment and records show that children experience a range of activities that lead them to build up their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically until they reach the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning. For example, an attractive display of painted skeletons and labelled body parts complemented children’s work on *The Body*. Children had learned about *Autumn* and changes to the environment; self-portraits and other pictures showed an understanding of themselves and their place in their families, and different children were observed using construction kits and bricks effectively. Many children are proficient at using the computer, and enjoy practising on a computer set up in a quiet room.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

43. No lessons in physical development were observed, but children in both Nursery and Reception groups were observed in the playground, and using small apparatus in the classroom. Both groups of children were advanced for their age, and generally reach the Early Learning Goals in physical development before the end of their Reception year. All children enjoy the space in the big playground, and move around fast, but with control and co-ordination. They can carry out complicated actions that go with songs, for example putting their “hand upon their heads,” and “elbows upon their knees.” Children use large wheeled toys safely, and have a good awareness of others. The Nursery children are adept at manipulating small objects, threading beads, drawing and painting with a range of implements, making constructions and writing recognisable letters. Reception children continue to refine and develop these skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

44. One music lesson was observed for Nursery and Reception children. The teaching was satisfactory, because it could have stretched the children further; they showed skills above expectations for their ages. Children quickly picked up and sang along to a chorus, accompanying their words with actions. They enjoyed choosing an instrument to play when it was their turn. Children knew the names of most of the instruments, and were not afraid of trying, for example saying “maroca” for “maraca.” The teacher appropriately reinforced instruments’ proper names, for example the difference between a xylophone and a glockenspiel.

45. Displays in both the Nursery and Reception show that children are well used to painting, drawing and constructing objects from a range of materials. Their work is attractively displayed. The Nursery does not make the most of its space and resources to provide a creative environment for imaginative play; the Year 1 class has an appropriate area to promote the Reception children’s creative development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A whole school focus on improving standards is having a positive effect;
- The quality of teaching in Years 2 to 6 is good;
- Good leadership and management are having a good impact on standards and achievement;

Commentary

46. Judging trends in pupils' performance over time is unreliable due to the varying numbers of pupils in successive year groups, the differing proportions with special educational needs, and the educational history of pupils who joined the school later on in their school lives. Nevertheless, the school recognised that standards in English had been falling over the past few years, particularly in reading in Years 1 and 2. A whole-school drive to improve the teaching of reading, and the implementation of a range of national strategies to improve literacy skills higher up the school have had a positive effect. In the National Curriculum tests in 2004, reading results in Year 2, and English results overall in Year 6 were much improved and were above average and well above average respectively. Pupils' speaking and listening skills in all year groups are above average and reflect their above average skills on entry and the school's strong emphasis on these areas. Writing, particularly in Year 2, but to some extent across the whole school, is not as good as it could be yet. Pupils' skills are in line with expectations for this time of the academic year in Year 2, and pupils without significant special educational needs in Year 6 have writing skills that are above expectations. Pupils' spelling ability is good across the school and particularly good in Key Stage 2. Overall, standards are currently similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

47. The quality of teaching is good in Years 3 to 6, with examples of some very good practice. As a result, pupils learn well and achievement is good. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is less consistent although some good teaching was seen in Year 2. It is satisfactory overall, as is pupils' achievement. Where teaching is at its best, it is characterised by work that is challenging, varied, pacy and well planned to meet individuals' needs. In a lesson for Year 3 and 4, pupils were given a variety of tasks and ways to present their work on poetry and adverbs. They used cartoon bubbles and text boxes on the computer to record their work, and researched the topic by using the internet, reference books and class poetry books. The teaching assistant worked with one group to complete a display on adverbs using art as a stimulus, which supported cross-curricular links very well. These very good strategies stimulated pupils' interest; they were very well behaved, applied themselves and learned extremely well. Teachers and assistants give pupils extra support where needed, and the pupils appreciate this and eagerly ask for help. This demonstrates the strength of relationships between pupils and adults. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, but where lessons are less successful they lack sharpness and imagination to capture the pupils' interest. Nevertheless, even in this context pupils are attentive and complete the task without fuss.

48. The subject is well led and managed by a recently appointed co-ordinator who has already audited resources and staff expertise. She has also begun to observe lessons and monitor work to assess the quality of teaching and learning, and implement improvements through feedback to staff and pupils and the instigation of whole-school strategies. One such improvement has been in pupils' presentation of work. In a wide range of subjects, many pupils in Years 2 to 6 have very good ideas, but their written work does not always reflect their abilities. However since the appointment of the new co-ordinator, written work has shown a steady improvement. This has been due to constructive, detailed marking to which the older pupils, particularly, respond positively. The co-ordinator has a clear view of how to improve the subject and, quite correctly, knows that consideration of what happens in the Foundation Stage should be more central to provision and pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6. Resources have improved since the last inspection; however, the library still needs more fiction books to suit the needs of the more advanced readers in Years 5 and 6.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Links between language, literacy and other subjects are good. Links are particularly strong with history and religious education as pupils have opportunities to write extended pieces of work. Other examples of cross-curricular use include: pupils in Years 5 and 6 writing letters to the government on various topics for PSHCE; and researching famous people using the library and internet to write biographies for history.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are above average;
- Teachers plan well for pupils of all abilities and needs;
- Teaching in lessons seen during the inspection was good;
- Assessment is good and information is used well in planning.

Commentary

50. The number of pupils in each year group and the proportion of higher attainers or those with special educational needs change significantly from year to year. Overall pupil numbers are small and judging trends in performance is therefore unreliable. On the face of it, standards in mathematics are similar to the time of the last inspection, but results are volatile year on year for the reasons stated. Pupils currently in Year 2 are starting the school year at the standards expected at this stage. They are on track to attain average standards and to achieve satisfactorily by the end of the school year. The small number of pupils in Year 6 are on target to reach at least the standard expected for eleven-year-olds by the end of the school year, with several set to attain higher standards. Standards overall are above average for this stage of the year and achievement is good.

51. Most of the teaching observed was in Years 3 to 6, and was good. Achievement is good for this age group. One part-time teacher was observed in Year 2, and this lesson was also good. However, an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning for Years 1 and 2 cannot be made. Taking pupils' past work and current standards into account, achievement for these younger pupils is satisfactory.

52. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. The *setting* arrangement, which was introduced last year for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6, works well. Although there is a wide spread of ability in each of the two teaching sets, this is less than would be the case if pupils were taught in their normal mixed-age and mixed-ability class groups, and is of considerable help to teachers in planning. The organisation of one lesson seen was complex but very effective in providing for the large number of lower attaining pupils with special educational needs. All pupils were supported very well throughout the lesson, either by the class teacher or by one of five teaching assistants. This enabled them to make good progress and achieve well. In the other lesson observed, pupils worked much more independently. Mental calculation skills are well developed. Many pupils found a variety of ways to make the number 111 using a combination of doubling, addition and subtraction, some confidently using a mixture of whole numbers and decimals. Pupils worked hard because work was demanding and gave them good opportunities to show what they could do. Later work was equally challenging and higher attaining pupils achieved well in constructing graphs based on grouped data and interpreting what they had found. Occasionally, pupils make less progress than they could do because initial discussions with the teacher take too long and pupils have insufficient time to complete work.

53. Teachers use ICT well to support teaching and learning. Discussions around the new interactive whiteboards are lively and the ability to manipulate shapes and symbols on the screen helps pupils understand clearly, for instance, the link between multiplication and grouping of objects into equal sized sets. At other times pupils use a number of specialist mathematics programs to practise specific skills. These programs are well designed and make a good contribution to learning.

54. Subject leadership and management are good. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and keep extensive records of progress. This, together with performance data from tests, is analysed in detail to show trends over time and to set overall targets for improvement. All pupils have individual learning targets for mathematics. Pupils assess their own progress and discuss their targets with their teacher. If necessary, targets are then modified. As a result of this collaboration pupils have a good understanding not only of how well they are doing, but also what they need to do to improve. The subject leader shares the *settled* teaching in Years 3 to 6 with the deputy head teacher which gives her good opportunities to keep an overview of the standards of pupils' work and the implementation of the curriculum and planning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to use their mathematics skills in other subjects. A good example occurred during the inspection; pupils used a computer program to record data from a science experiment and then convert it to a graph of the results to show how the length of a shadow changes when the object's distance from the light source is changed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school;
- All pupils achieve well;

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding are above expectations for their age in all year groups.

Commentary

56. The Year 6 National Curriculum tests do not give an accurate picture of how well pupils achieve in science. With one pupil equalling 9 per cent, as in 2004, the picture can be dramatically altered by just one or two pupils' individual results. Results in 2003 for example, when there was a small cohort and several pupils with special educational needs, appear to be well below average. In 2004, with a larger cohort and fewer with special educational needs, results appear to be above the national average. In general, however, more pupils than average reach the standard expected of 13 year olds which shows that the provision supports high standards. The picture is somewhat similar for the Year 2 tests, although year-on-year differences are less marked. In 2003, teachers' assessments showed average percentages of pupils reaching standards expected for their age (seven years), and well above average percentages reaching standards expected of nine year olds. Results were similar in 2004. This is similar to the time of the last inspection.

57. Observations, discussions with pupils and analysis of their work show that most of those who do not have special educational needs are performing above expectations for their age, and the achievement of all pupils, including both those with special educational needs and high attainment is currently good right through the school.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils' developing writing skills and the use of worksheets means that their books do not always reflect their knowledge and understanding. However, practical investigative work reveals that pupils are used to carrying out independent investigations; are sensible; have a good amount of scientific knowledge and understanding, for example about electricity and circuits; and, in Year 2, understand the need to change only one variable to conduct a fair test. Teaching was good for these two age groups; it is routinely carried out by staff other than their own class teacher, and pupils achieve well. In both classes, the teacher was lively, interesting, had high expectations of what pupils of all abilities could achieve, gave very good support where needed and made good use of the interactive whiteboard. Each teacher gave the pupils a considerable degree of independence and responsibility, which they took very well.

58. In Years 3 and 4, pupils showed clearly that they fully understood how to carry out a scientific investigation, how to record the results in a table, and interpret them. Their concern for fair testing, and horror at the thought they might have conducted an unfair test, was a real testimony to their understanding and the good teaching in this area. The teacher made very good use of ICT and links with mathematics to support the interpretation of the data. Pupils worked particularly well in collaboration with one another, with minimal support, and were very well challenged by the activity.

59. In Years 5 and 6, pupils spoke extremely knowledgeably about floating and sinking in terms of upthrust and surface area; one pupil had suggested a detailed and appropriate investigation on this theme, which informed the activity for the lesson. Pupils' knowledge, together with the high powered initial discussion with the teacher, and pupils' well-presented and detailed work of the last few months, showed the generally good quality of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, a small group of boys' silly behaviour spoilt the investigation for their group, and the overall quality of the lesson, since too much time was spent on behaviour management.

60. The subject is well led and managed which is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' test performance and analysis of work form the basis of the implementation of strategies to improve pupils' achievement. The subject leader has a full understanding of how to develop science further, for example by including science in teachers' performance management targets, improving resources and supporting staff visits to see leading teachers at work. A new assessment system has been implemented in Years 3 to 6, but this differs from that in Years 1 and 2. Both systems have their merits, but without a single system going through the school, a fair analysis of pupils' progress is difficult to make.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Year 3 to Year 6 classes;
- Planning for ICT, including its use in subjects across the curriculum, has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory;
- Leadership and management of the subject are good;
- Assessment of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

61. The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection, although the standards reported are the same. However, expectations of what pupils should be able to do have moved on considerably since 1999 and so, in fact, they have improved well. The standard of pupils' ICT skills, knowledge and understanding are at expected levels for this stage of the academic year. Pupils' achievement, overall, is satisfactory, but is likely to be good in Years 3 to 6 by the end of this school year.

In most classes, the teaching of ICT consists of a short period of whole-class instruction with opportunities for individual pupils to practise throughout the rest of the week. This arrangement generally works well and makes good use of the computers that teachers have available in their classrooms. Teachers explain new ideas and demonstrate new skills well. Consequently, pupils know what to do when they carry out their own practical work. Pupils are keen to be involved in demonstrations, for example volunteering to show the rest of the class how to change the appearance of text to make it more appropriate for the theme of "Autumn." Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have access to a room next to their classroom, which holds four computers and a laptop. With two pupils to a computer, this enables half the class to have access to a computer during an ICT lesson. Very good planning means that the pupils are taught in half-classes, each group having a "theory" and a practical session. The room was used well in an excellent control technology lesson. This was a particularly good mix of group discussion and working in pairs. Expectations were high, and the lesson was very well organised for pupils of all abilities. All pupils achieved very well. The highest attaining pupils made considerable progress in devising an advanced program to control a pair of linked traffic lights. Other pupils successfully programmed a single traffic light. Standards in control technology were above those expected for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils at this stage of the school year.

62. Teaching, overall, is better in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 to 2, where it is satisfactory, because teachers have greater confidence in the subject leading to higher expectations of

what pupils can achieve, and the work is more interesting and innovative. The new co-ordinator supports less confident colleagues well, for example in preparing lesson plans. She has also reorganised the way in which pupils' work is stored on the school's network. This has improved both the efficiency for staff and pupils, and her ability to monitor pupils' performance and identify ways in which she can further assist colleagues. Work has just begun to develop assessment procedures to track pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding, but is not yet completed.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. The school has adopted a new scheme of work, which makes good links with other subjects. All aspects of ICT now receive sufficient attention. For example, pupils in Year 2 type short passages of text, which they then edit to correct spellings and simple punctuation, and they paint computer pictures in the style of artists such as Jackson Pollock. A group of pupils in Year 6 explained to an inspector how they had used a spreadsheet to investigate budgeting for a party in a mathematics lesson. Multimedia presentations on the Aztecs, studied in history, are attractive combinations of text and pictures. Pupils often use the Internet to find information, which they then adapt suitably to fit the style of presentation used.

HUMANITIES

Geography and History

64. No judgement about the overall quality of provision can be given about these subjects as no lessons were observed during the inspection. Schemes of work based on national guidance are followed, and planning for both subjects is appropriate. A limited amount of pupils' work and displays around the school were analysed. These show that pupils build soundly upon their skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Learning in both subjects is well reinforced by visits, suitable artefacts, and the use of the Internet and books for research. In **history**, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about the chronology of historical events through practical experience. They compared present-day toys with those from past eras, including Victorian and Roman times; this work was underpinned by an interesting visit to the Reading Museum. Older pupils researched famous people from past times to write their biographies. In **geography** younger pupils learn about their immediate locality and the wider world. Good links are made with other subjects such as English, as pupils read stories and "send postcards" from around the world.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- The scheme of work is good and provides an interesting basis for teaching and learning;
- Teaching for Years 3 to 6 is good, and pupils achieve well;
- Assessment of pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding is underdeveloped.

Commentary

65. The school's scheme of work is appropriately based on Berkshire's locally agreed syllabus. It incorporates units of work from national curriculum guidelines as well as the Oxford Diocese Scheme 2000. Although weighted towards Christianity, other religious faiths including Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism are taught at significant times of the year and pupils' religious knowledge and understanding are reinforced by enacting aspects of the faiths' festivals and celebrations. Pupils have benefited from visits from the Vicar and other religious leaders, and visits made to local churches and other places of worship. Altogether, the scheme provides an interesting curriculum, which contributes well to pupils' learning and positive attitudes to religious education, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

66. Three lessons were observed; two for Years 1 and 2, and one for Years 3 and 4. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, although good for the older pupils. These lessons, together with some analysis of pupils' work, show that standards are as expected in Years 1 and 2, and are above expectations for pupils' age in the older classes. This is similar to the time of the previous inspection. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The difference in achievement and standards attained is largely to do with the quality of teaching, and the learning that follows. Teaching for the older pupils was adventurous and interesting, and gave pupils good opportunities for expressing their own views and feelings, for instance when considering two parables of Jesus. Learning in this lesson was well reinforced by the use of art, the interactive whiteboard and literacy to stimulate and engage the pupils' interest. The pupils recorded their work in a variety of ways including computer text, posters and collage. A skilled teaching assistant gave high quality support to pupils with special educational needs so they remained fully involved and learning, and pupils proudly shared their work at the end of a very energetic and lively lesson.

67. Teaching for the younger pupils was satisfactory but lacked pace and did not capitalise on the interesting curriculum and pupils' positive attitudes. In one lesson on baptism, for example, opportunities were missed for the pupils to experience its significance in their own lives, for instance by acting it out themselves. This would have brought the topic to life for these very young children who became restless from time to time and lost concentration. Pupils used prescribed work sheets to record their work, so had little opportunity to discuss, reflect and note their own thoughts and feelings. Religious education is well supported by assemblies, where pupils listen well, reflect and respond appropriately. In turn, it supports pupils' personal development very well as pupils discuss subjects sensibly and are respectful of other peoples' opinions and points of view.

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is now a comprehensive policy to go with the re-written scheme of work which is an improvement since the last inspection when it was incomplete. Resources are improved and are now good, and helpfully stored in boxes that relate to each unit of work. Although pupils are given time to 'brainstorm' what they know, what they want to know and how they will find it out at the beginning of each new topic, the information gathered from this is not used sufficiently to aid teachers' planning, nor to match work to the pupils' needs. There is no clear system to track pupils' developing skills as they move through the school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

69. No lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology or music. A dance lesson and a limited amount of art and design work were sampled. Consequently, no judgements about pupils' achievement, or the quality of provision, teaching or learning have been made in these subjects.

70. Curriculum planning for **art and design** is satisfactory. Planning provides for pupils to build up their skills systematically as they move through the school and they use sketch books appropriately to practise particular skills and techniques. The work seen around school, however, was relatively limited in scope, and did not show evidence of innovation or adventurous creativity.

71. Planning for **design and technology** is satisfactory. The scheme of work ensures that pupils have sufficient opportunities to design and make a range of products from materials such as card, wood and food items. Pupils' progress is assessed satisfactorily against the learning intentions set out in the scheme of work. Last year a design and technology focus week added good variety to the school's normal provision. Pupils experienced a wide range of activities, such as designing clothes for a fashion show, constructing waterproof shelters and making kites.

72. Curriculum provision for **music** is satisfactory. The subject is taught by a specialist who is on the staff, and music contributes well to the life of the school. It is used in other subjects, such as dance, and all pupils have opportunities to perform, for example in Christmas celebrations. Some pupils have instrumental string and recorder tuition and the school choir sings outside the school, for example at the Newbury Show. Pupils in junior classes put on an annual show such as "Robin Hood". Such opportunities contribute well to pupils' personal development through development of self-confidence and ability to work in a team.

73. The scheme of work for **physical education** shows that the curriculum provides well for pupils to systematically develop a range of skills. In the lesson observed, the pupils were interpreting Theseus' return to Crete through creative dance. The pupils were engrossed in their own interpretation of the events and at the end of the lesson watched each other's performances intently. The teaching seen was good, with innovative use of music and percussion instruments. The pupils were well motivated and enthusiastic and the lesson had been planned carefully. Pupils knew the importance of warming up and cooling down, and were appropriately dressed. The hard work of the co-ordinator has ensured that physical education

is given a high profile within the school. The co-ordinator has introduced various initiatives, including membership of Berkshire Schools Sports Partnership, which enables the pupils to access a whole range of sports. The numerous extra curricular activities, including team games and country dancing, also enhance provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' personal development is central to the ethos of the school;
- PSHCE is taught very well, both through the formal curriculum, and informally.

Commentary

74. The school's stated aims centre very much on promoting pupils' personal development. In particular, the school wants all pupils to be and feel valued and secure, to be happy, responsible and respectful of each other, and to share a healthy lifestyle. These aims are reflected in the school's ethos, curriculum and daily life.

75. The "small school factor" is very evident at Basildon. Staff, pupils and parents know each other very well and the atmosphere is one of mutual support and respect in which pupils thrive. The school's effective behaviour policy is underpinned by the *Golden Time* system, which is a privilege that is withdrawn as a sanction. *Golden Time* is planned to promote pupils' personal development. It is a weekly half-hour opportunity for pupils from throughout the school to choose from a range of well-structured activities. Within these activities, each supervised by a member of staff, pupils make their own decisions. For example, in cookery, they choose the recipe and organise their own ingredients and resources. It gives older pupils the opportunity to develop caring and responsible attitudes towards the younger ones, as they work in mixed age groups, and to take the lead on activities and decision-making. Younger pupils, in turn, learn to do this for themselves as they mature.

76. Each class also has a more formal time, *Circle Time*, which has two functions. Firstly, it is an opportunity for pupils to discuss matters important to themselves and the school community. Outcomes are taken to the *School Council* by the class representatives, and decisions made by this body are taken seriously and generally acted upon. This gives pupils a very good insight into the workings of a democratic society, so promoting their understanding of Citizenship very effectively. *Circle Time's* second function is a formal time for PSHCE. Years 5 and 6, for example, discussed and role-played the differences between aggressive, passive and assertive behaviours. This was very effectively linked to their own potential behaviour, such as what to do if they were bullied, or someone tried to persuade them to smoke.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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