

INSPECTION REPORT

EARLS COLNE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Earls Colne, Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115312

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Clarke

Lead inspector: Tom Shine

Dates of inspection: 8th - 10th November 2004

Inspection number: 266762

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 339

School address: Park Lane
Earls Colne
Colchester
Postcode: CO6 2RH

Telephone number: (01787) 222 205
Fax number: (01787) 222 010

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Nicky Spelling
governors:

Date of previous 11th January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

With 339 pupils currently on roll, aged between three to 11, Earls Colne Primary School is larger than others of this type. There is a similar number of boys and girls, most of whom come from the immediate locality around the village, but just over a quarter of pupils come from further afield. The roll includes 34 children in the nursery, all of whom attend part-time and more are due to arrive in January. Historically, the nursery was funded through the Funding Agency for Schools, then by the Local Authority, when the school became a Foundation School. The nursery funding was however, partial and the school took the decision to invest additional resources into the nursery. Children's attainment varies when they enter the school but is generally typical for children's ages. The intake to the school is mixed but the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and only two pupils come to the school that do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, while those with statements is broadly average. Support is targeted on a range of needs, including those arising from specific, moderate learning or social, emotional and behavioural issues. The movement of pupils joining or leaving the school, other than at the normal times, is lower than in most schools. The school is involved in a number of initiatives such as the School Sports Co-ordinator Partnership and Healthy Schools Partnership and has received a schools' achievement award from the Department for Education and Skills.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
24254	Tom Shine	Lead inspector	Religious education Music Special educational needs
14347	Joan Lyndsay	Lay inspector	
21171	Sally Handford	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography History English as an additional language
29378	Ken Watson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology
15011	Marion Wallace	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14 - 15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	16 - 27
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

This school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall, but it has **serious weaknesses** in both teaching and achievement in English and science in Years 3 to 6 and in crucial aspects of leadership and management. However there are strengths in the provision for nursery and reception children, in pupils' good attitudes and behaviour and in the good levels of care. It gives unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Much of teaching is good, but it is too inconsistent especially in English and science for older pupils; as a result by Year 6, pupils are underachieving in these subjects.
- Provision for children in the nursery and reception is good.
- There are weaknesses in the school's procedures to check on pupils' progress and their use in teachers' planning.
- There is a good range of additional activities that enhance the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils' personal development is good and is reflected in their good attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and learn effectively.
- Pupils are well cared for and there are good links with parents and very good links with the community.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design throughout the school.

The school has made satisfactory progress in some aspects, since it was last inspected in January 1999, such as providing more emphasis on investigative and experimental work in science and the setting of homework. But there has been insufficient progress in many others, such as pupils' national test results in Year 6 and standards in English and science and still not enough account is taken of pupils' progress in teachers' planning. Other weaknesses identified in the last report remain. For example, the co-ordinators are still not sufficiently involved in monitoring their subjects and governors are still ineffective in checking the school's performance. Taken together, the school has made unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

In general pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory by the time they leave the school. Throughout the Foundation Stage (the nursery and reception), children are learning well and are making good progress and are on course to achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception. The majority are likely to be working at National Curriculum

levels in some areas before they leave the reception. Inspection finds that current standards in Year 6 are better than the above table suggests but they are still below the standard expected of pupils this age in English and science, where they are underachieving, although they are above in mathematics. The results in 2003/04 may have been adversely affected by disruption to teaching and the presence in Year 6 of a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In Year 2, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in reading, writing and mathematics and their standards are up to the level expected for pupils of this age. These standards are broadly similar to those attained in the national tests last year. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education throughout the school are broadly at the levels expected. In art and design standards are above those expected and all pupils are achieving well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good, overall. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but is unsatisfactory in some classes for the older pupils (Years 3 to 6) in English and science. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage overall, where children learn well and is very good in the nursery. It is also good in English in Years 1 and 2. Teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs is good, but would be more effective for older pupils if work was more closely matched to their needs. Generally, procedures to check on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in ICT and art and design. Teachers' planning in these subjects emphasises key skills and ensures they are taught consistently well. The quality of marking pupils' work is inconsistent. The curriculum is satisfactory and there is a good range of additional activities, both during and outside the school day. There are good levels of care and links with parents and very good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory. The headteacher works effectively to ensure the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and knows what needs to be done to bring about improvements in standards in some subjects and aspects of teaching. However, she has not yet made sufficient impact on the weaknesses. Many subject co-ordinators do not fulfil their roles effectively. The governing body is not effective enough in challenging the school about its academic performance. Except for omissions in the annual report, it ensures the school meets its statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are happy with the school and feel it is approachable. Pupils like being at the school and are very trusting of all staff in the school. They are confident there are a number of adults to whom they can take any problems.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve leadership, management and governance;
- raise the achievement of pupils in Year 6 in English and science;
- improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good level in Years 3 to 6;
- develop rigorous procedures to check on pupils' progress and use the information in teachers' planning to ensure work is more closely matched to pupils' needs;

AND, TO MEET STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:

- ensure the governors' annual report contains the full range of information required.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND COURSES

Children **achieve well** in the Foundation Stage and **satisfactorily** in Years 1 and 2 and standards are broadly in line with those expected in most subjects. In Years 3 to 6, standards are also broadly typical for pupils' ages, but by Year 6 they are **below those expected** in English and science and here these pupils **are underachieving**. **This is a serious weakness**. There were no significant differences observed between the performance of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 6 attained poor standards in the National Curriculum tests in 2004 in English and science.
- Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage (the nursery and reception) and are on course to attain the early learning goals in all areas of learning and in some they will exceed them.
- Standards in mathematics are better than in English and science and here pupils are achieving satisfactorily throughout the school.
- Pupils are achieving well in art and design throughout the school.

Commentary

1. The table below shows that pupils in Year 2 in 2004 attained standards in reading and mathematics in national tests that are broadly similar to those attained in most schools. In writing, pupils attained standards that are above those reached in most schools. These results are similar to the test results reported during the last inspection. What the table does not show is that these results are identical when set against those in similar schools (*that is, schools within the same percentage band of pupils eligible for free school meals*). Although the results have tended to fluctuate in Year 2 in recent years, taken together, the trend in the school's performance in reading, writing and mathematics based on the last five years up to 2004 was above the national trend. The inspection finds that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with those expected for pupils in Year 2. In science, standards are also in line with those expected nationally and are slightly lower than those identified by the teacher assessments in 2004. In Year 2, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well as they are supported effectively and work is matched well to their needs.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.3 (16.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.4 (16.5)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.7 (16.7)	16.2 (16.3)

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

2. The results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 were not nearly as good for their age, as the table below shows. In English and science, they attained standards that are well below those attained nationally. In mathematics their standards are better, but are still below the national average. What the table does not show is that compared to the performance of pupils in similar schools (*that is, those schools that achieved similar average points scores in the national tests in 2000*), they achieved well below the average in English and science and below the average in mathematics. The school reports there are particular reasons that partly account for these low results in 2004 and that reversed a previously upward trend. There was a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in last year's cohort (28 per cent) and also disruption to the teaching staff in both classes over the past two years. Taken together, the trend in the school's performance over the past five years of pupils in Year 6 is below the national trend. However, although last year's results were much lower than the previous year's, when they were in line with national averages in English and above in mathematics and science, they have been consistently well below the performance of pupils in similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.6 (27.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.2 (27.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	27.1 (29.3)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 54 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Inspection findings are that for the majority of pupils, standards in English in Year 6 are below those expected for pupils' ages. Their speaking and listening skills are broadly in line with expected standards, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to speak at length and to develop their ideas in discussion sessions. Their reading and writing skills are below the standard expected of pupils in this year group. In writing, much of it unfinished; some of it is of a low standard and pupils have not yet learned to develop their ideas. There is a lack of consistency in the way knowledge and skills have been taught and in how pupils present their work. As a result most pupils in Year 6 are underachieving. There is a better picture in mathematics, where, in Year 6, standards are above those expected. Pupils are benefiting from more consistency in the way the subject is being taught and also in the setting arrangements in the upper part of the school (Years 4 to 6). In the upper set, pupils were adept in arranging four digits to make four two-digit numbers that add up to 200. In science, standards are below those expected and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Generally their scientific skills have not been developed systematically, although there is improvement in their investigative skills. However, their skills in recording and writing up their investigations are very limited. In Years 3 to 6, pupils with special educational needs receive good support and achieve satisfactorily. The work the teaching assistants are asked to provide is not as consistently matched to pupils' needs as it could be.
4. In information and communication technology (ICT), pupils' standards in Years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with those expected and all pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils are confident and enjoy using the technology. In religious education, pupils' standards broadly meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and pupils'

achievement is satisfactory. In art and design pupils are achieving well and are working at above expected levels because of consistently good teaching. They make regular gains in their knowledge and skills throughout the school. In other subjects there was insufficient evidence to form judgements about pupils' standards.

5. Children enter the nursery class with levels of attainment that are broadly typical for their ages, although they can fluctuate, depending on the cohort. Children achieve well in all areas of learning as a result of good teaching and good support from all adults, either nursery nurses or teaching assistants and make good progress. Inspection finds all children are on course to attain the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception. Higher attaining children are already achieving the goals in personal, social and emotional development and it is expected that most children will be working within the National Curriculum levels before they leave the reception in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. This is a strength of the school. One child in the nursery who came to school with very little English and all children with special educational needs in the Foundation Stage, are well supported and make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils have **good** attitudes to school. Their behaviour is also **good**. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance and punctuality are both **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils show a high level of interest in school life.
- The school promotes good relationships very well.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop a strong multicultural awareness.

COMMENTARY

6. The good attitudes to school seen at the last inspection have been maintained and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Parents say that their children are happy in school and pupils themselves confirm this. They are eager to learn and work hard individually and in groups and listen well to their teachers and each other. Pupils also show a high level of interest in other aspects of school life such as at lunchtime and in school clubs. The pupils who come to the Early Birds' Club do so enthusiastically and clubs such as netball are well attended and much enjoyed.
7. Relationships in school remain good because the staff work very hard to ensure that pupils show a high level of respect for others, regardless of their colour, age or ability. Pupils get on well together when working in the classroom or outside in the playground. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included and accepted by their peers. In the playground and the dining hall, older pupils relate well and are willing to help the younger ones.
8. Good standards of behaviour have also been maintained in and around the school. A very small number of pupils have challenging behaviour but they are generally supported well in class through the use of appropriate strategies and as a result lessons are not disrupted. Pupils are very aware of the school's systems of rewards and consequences such as the 'lolly-stick' system and this is effective in ensuring high standards of behaviour. In the playground, although some behaviour is boisterous especially amongst the younger boys, there was no evidence of any intimidation. Pupils and parents are confident that if any harassment did occur, it would be dealt with effectively. There were no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection.
9. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Although there is no overt planning for spiritual elements in lessons, they are present, for example in ICT lessons when formulae are quickly worked out and appear on the screen to pupils' gasps of amazement. Pupils also have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of art by studying the work of artists such as Gustav Klimt and by being given the opportunity to look at their peers' drawings and to reflect on what they like about them. Older pupils listened avidly as their teacher read out a poem by Sir Walter Scott whilst background music added to the atmosphere. Assemblies give time for prayers and thoughts about wider issues, such as wisdom and remembering those who died for their country.

10. The provision for pupils' moral development remains good. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to think of others, to be polite and kind. For example in a religious education lesson in Year 1, pupils were asked to think of ways they could help others at home and at school. Positive behaviour is highlighted and celebrated publicly such as through the Stars of the Week board and this gives pupils the incentive to behave well and to show kindness to others. Pupils' social development is also provided for well. Older pupils are encouraged to take responsible roles such as play-leaders, to help younger ones. Pupils also sit in mixed-aged groups at lunchtimes, which helps their social development. In addition, the many extra-curricular clubs and the range of visits that take place also do much to enhance the pupils' social skills. The annual residential visit to London for Year 6 pupils is an important aspect of their social development and maturity. Pupils of all ages are given a good experience of responsibility through the weekly forum meetings that work to improve the school in specific areas such as gardening and tidying up.
11. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There is a limited range of opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of today's multicultural society. Other countries are studied to some extent in geography and other faiths are considered in religious education. Pupils are given experiences of different aspects of the arts such as music, painting and drama that are enhanced through visits to museums, galleries and other places of interest. However, there are not yet enough experiences for pupils to appreciate the contribution made to society by other races and faiths.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8%	School data	0.1%
National data	5.1%	National data	0.4%

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

12. Attendance levels at the school remain above the national average. The school has maintained a very low level of unauthorised absence, as parents are supportive of the school, ensure their children attend regularly and inform the school of any reasons for absence. Some parents remove their children for holidays during term time but the school discourages this practice. Very few pupils arrive late.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**, overall. The general quality of teaching is **satisfactory**, enabling pupils to learn appropriately. The curriculum is generally broad and reasonably balanced and is **satisfactory**, overall. The school's care for its pupils is **good** and it has **good** links with parents and **very good** links with the community.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, teaching is unsatisfactory in key areas such as English and science in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in ICT and art and design.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching is very good in the nursery and good in the reception class.
- There are weaknesses in the school's procedures to check on pupils' progress and their use in teachers' planning.
- Most teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well.
- Most teaching assistants and other staff work well with teachers and provide effective support.

Commentary

13. At the last inspection, teaching in the nursery and reception classes was good with 75 per cent of lessons being good or better. During this inspection, all lessons observed were never less than good and in the nursery all were very good. Only one reception class was open during the inspection; the second class will open in the spring term. In both the nursery and reception, planning follows statutory guidance and because the teachers plan carefully, activities are matched well to individual needs. As a result, all children enjoy interesting but challenging activities. The nursery is an exciting place to learn and in both the nursery and reception, all adults are enthusiastic and consistently strive to enrich children's learning experiences. Children know there are clear guidelines and expectations of behaviour and learn to behave well. As a result, children's personal, social and emotional skills are developing well and they are well prepared to make good progress in the other areas of learning.
14. In the rest of the school, teaching is satisfactory overall, the same judgement as at the last inspection and as the table below shows, just over 58 per cent was good or better. However, two practitioners, one in the nursery, the other an exceptionally good teaching assistant and specialist in ICT, skew the proportion of very good teaching. Together, their lessons account for nearly 15 per cent of the very good lessons observed. But some weaknesses still remain, particularly in the teaching of English and science in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6). In Year 1 and 2 teachers plan jointly in the parallel classes and this ensures consistency in what is taught and in how pupils learn. In English there is too much variation in the quality of teaching which ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. There is also too much inconsistency in teachers' planning. This is because the scheme of work, based on guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is not being followed rigorously and this results in a lack of systematic teaching of skills and knowledge in the subject. This is most noticeable when the work of pupils in the parallel classes is compared. In Years 4 and 6 in particular, it is clear that some of the teachers are not following a clear plan and the gulf between the quality of work in these classes is significant. In science, only four lessons were observed. None were unsatisfactory and two were good and very good respectively. However, previous work in pupils' books indicates that this quality of teaching is not replicated consistently throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6. In Year 6, the variations in the quality of teaching are most noticeable. In one of the classes, pupils' standards match those expected, while in the other they are below those expected, indicating unsatisfactory teaching. There is an absence of marking in some pupils' books. In some classes, pupils are not challenged to record their investigations in a scientific way, although the emphasis on

investigative work has improved since the last inspection when its absence was identified as a weakness.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0 %)	11 (22.9 %)	17 (35.4 %)	17 (35.4 %)	3 (6.3 %)	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.

15. Teaching is good in ICT and art and design as planning ensures that crucial skills are taught consistently in both subjects. In ICT, a specialist teaching assistant takes half the class in the computer suite, while the class teacher takes the other half for other activities. These very good lessons contain very good questioning that allows pupils to share their knowledge and also enables the teaching assistant to assess their levels of understanding. She gives very clear explanations and demonstrations and is very skilled at ensuring that the work planned matches the time available. In art and design, the teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to develop pupils' skills such as drawing with a pen using different techniques such as tone and shade. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations and are proud of their skills which are above those normally expected.

16. There are inconsistencies in the school's procedures to check on pupils' progress and how they are used in teachers' planning, including target setting. In the Foundation Stage, procedures to check on children's progress are good and this information is used effectively in planning work that matches the children's needs well, including children with special educational needs. Although pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 take the optional tests of the QCA, the information from these tests is not used adequately in teachers' planning to ensure work is matched appropriately to pupils' needs. There are also inconsistencies with some teachers' judgements about the levels at which their pupils are achieving. This results in some idiosyncrasies, such as a teacher in Year 4 assessing the work of a higher attaining pupil being below that which the same pupil achieved at the end of Year 2. This results in work not being matched appropriately to pupils at this level and also to pupils of below average levels. In English, there are thorough procedures to check on pupils' attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6, but not all teachers are using them. In mathematics, although the best teachers make their learning objectives clear and target their questions and tasks to the varying ability groups, this is not consistently the case and some teachers target the middle groups, neglecting to meet the needs of both the higher attaining and lower attaining groups. In science, procedures to check on pupils' progress are patchy. For example, the quality of teachers' marking is very variable, with evidence in some pupils' books of no marking at all. The school acknowledges that more needs to be done to improve its assessment procedures.

17. The good relationships between adults and children in both the nursery and the reception continue as pupils progress through the school. The vast majority of teachers and other staff have good relationships with their pupils and in general the majority of lessons are managed effectively because pupils are interested in what they are learning when work is matched to their needs and work well together in groups.

18. The governing body spends significant sums on support staff. This reflects a commitment to supporting all groups of pupils. Staff work well together and the support staff provide good support. However the contribution of the support staff in Years 3 to 6, including that for pupils with special educational needs, would be more effective still if all received training and if all teachers' planning matched the needs of all groups of pupils appropriately.
19. The co-ordinator for special educational needs leads this area well and has improved the school's identification procedures for these pupils. As a result the number of pupils on the school's register of needs has reduced to a realistic level. When teaching, she provides good support to small groups needing specialist attention. She has set up an Early Birds' Club for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. This takes place weekly before the start of school. In a very good session observed during the inspection, pupils were stimulated for the start of the day, developed their ability to follow instructions and co-operated well with each other.

THE CURRICULUM

The overall quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**. It is enriched through a **good** range of additional activities. The accommodation is **good** and resources are **adequate** for teaching the curriculum.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular provision.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- An attractive and stimulating learning environment.

Commentary

20. The curriculum meets statutory requirements including provision for religious education and collective worship. The National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies are well established, but in literacy they are not followed consistently in all the classes for the older pupils. As a result they need further adaptation and refinement to meet the needs of all pupils. There is insufficient emphasis given to the systematic development of skills and knowledge through each age group and the curriculum is not underpinned by sufficiently rigorous assessment procedures. These aspects were criticised at the last inspection and have still not been addressed, with the result that standards in subjects such as literacy and science are not as good as they should be.
21. Overall, the time given to the taught curriculum is less than the recommended minimum in both key stages. The way the timetable is organised leads to variations between classes in the time given to different subjects. Subjects such as science, religious education, music and design and technology are often given inappropriate time slots, leading to inequalities in provision for different groups. On the other hand there are very real strengths in provision. For example, pupils enjoy a strong curriculum in ICT and physical education and experience a wide range of stimulating activities in art and design. Curricular provision for the Foundation Stage is good.

The teaching of French throughout the school helps language development and raises cultural awareness.

22. Provision for special educational needs is good in most of the school. Since the appointment of the co-ordinator the school's identification procedures have improved and the school is now more confident in accurately assessing and identifying need. The number of pupils on the special needs register has fallen and reflects realistically the proportion of these pupils in the school. All these pupils have an individual education plan and parents are invited to attend the regular review meetings. More training is required for some of the numerous teaching assistants to enable them to be fully effective. Resources for special educational needs are limited.
23. There is an extensive programme of visits and visitors giving good support to the curriculum throughout the school. This includes expert visitors such as a secondary school teacher for physical education (PE) and players from Colchester United Football Club and Essex County Cricket Club. There are regular visits to local castles, museums and zoos and pupils in Year 6 enjoy a four-day residential visit to London every year. A good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs for activities such as sewing, art, music, gymnastics and living history enriches the curriculum for many pupils. Drama productions are a regular feature of school life, much enjoyed by pupils and appreciated by parents. The school regularly participates in inter-school sporting activities such as football, netball and cross-country running.
24. There are sufficient experienced teachers in the school, enhanced by some high quality support staff in areas such as information and communication technology. The school has continued to improve its premises, for example, by installing a wheelchair ramp and it provides a stimulating and attractive learning environment. There is a computer suite, a reasonably-sized hall, good outdoor play and sporting facilities and an outdoor heated swimming pool that is used regularly in the summer. Resources are adequate but difficult to access, as the organisation of the timetable does not take account of the need for them to be shared among classes.

Care, guidance and support

There are **good** procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The provision of support, advice and guidance for pupils based on monitoring is **satisfactory**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Child protection and health and safety procedures are good.
- Induction arrangements are good.

Commentary

25. Pupils' welfare continues to be given a high priority in the school and all staff have received recent training in child protection procedures. The school has adopted local area guidelines and the headteacher, as the named teacher, communicates with the relevant services when necessary. Any health and safety issues are recorded and

dealt with as soon as possible by the site manager. He plays an important role in ensuring the school buildings and equipment are kept in a safe condition as well as carrying out many of the recent improvements such as fitting new windows and guttering. Governors also carry out regular risk assessments of the site. There are several members of staff who have been trained in first aid and the school has good procedures to ensure pupils with specific medical needs are effectively cared for.

26. The school's methods of monitoring pupils' academic progress are not yet fully established and the effective use of personal targets is not consistent throughout the school. Some pupils are aware of class and group targets for example for literacy, but these have not yet been refined so individuals know what they need to do to improve. The school does not have any formal method to record pupils' personal development apart from the annual progress report to parents, unless there are specific concerns. However, staff know the pupils well and are alert to any needs they may have. Those dealing with pupils who have particularly challenging behaviour for example, can call on the expertise of outside agencies. All adults, including support staff, are very caring towards pupils who have a very high level of trust in them. Pupils are confident that if they have any concerns there is a range of people they can talk to who will resolve the matter.
27. Children new to the school settle in very quickly and parents are particularly happy with this aspect. As most children join from the nursery, they are already familiar with the school environment and the staggered starting time helps them to adjust quickly. Pupils who join further up the school also settle well as they are able to visit beforehand and then are paired with a friend in their class until they become familiar with the routines. The school no longer has a school council for pupils to air their views and there are no regular questionnaires to canvass their opinions. In addition, the use of circle time is inconsistent throughout the school. However, the weekly forum meetings that take place each term can be used to seek pupils' views on specific subjects. In addition, pupils find staff approachable and are aware that their views will be listened to, although there are no formal channels.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents. Links with the community are **very good** and links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have positive views of the school and support its work well.
- Very beneficial links with the community have been maintained.
- Pupils benefit from the strong links established with other schools.

Commentary

28. Parents are very happy with how much their children enjoy coming to school, how approachable the school is and how well their children settle in. They support the school well in many important ways, for example by ensuring their children attend regularly, helping with homework tasks and volunteering to help in the class. Some listen to readers or help to make topic books. In addition, the very active Friends'

Association, through its highly successful fund-raising, has done much to enhance the school environment and resources. For example, money raised is used to fund the swimming instructor and for purchasing new equipment such as digital cameras. This support therefore has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and learning.

29. A small number of parents feel they are not kept well enough informed about their child's progress. However, the annual written progress reports are good and give clear information about what has been covered and the progress made by the pupils. In addition to the formal consultation meetings, parents have regular opportunities to look at their child's work and teachers make themselves available on a daily basis should parents have any concerns. The information that the school produces is generally good and includes regular, friendly newsletters. However, the governors' annual report to parents has several items missing that statutorily should be reported on, such as how teachers' professional development impacts on teaching and learning.
30. The school is very much a part of the local community with mutually beneficial results. For example, it uses the local area very well to enhance learning by visits to woodland, the river and the other sites of interest. Visits are made to the local church at Christmas and for the Harvest Festival and representatives from churches visit to talk to pupils. The community supports school events such as the annual bonfire night party that has now become a very popular, major local event. Local companies sponsor school events and improvements, which have enabled the grounds to be enhanced. Members of a local professional football club visit each week to coach pupils. In addition, the community makes use of the school premises for various clubs and pupils visit and entertain in local homes for the elderly. These very good links enliven learning for pupils who benefit from a greater understanding of their wider community. Pupils also gain from the links established with local schools, such as the support given by the secondary PE teacher. The headteacher is invited to one secondary school on a termly basis to meet ex-pupils and to celebrate their achievements and pupils are able to visit the schools they hope to transfer to. As a result of this and other visits, pupils are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **unsatisfactory**, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is unsatisfactory and her management is not yet fully effective. The leadership of many subject leaders and the governance of the school are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision, but she has not yet made sufficient impact in raising standards and improving teaching.
- Many of the subject co-ordinators do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the work in their subjects.
- Although the governors have satisfactory understanding of the school' strengths and weaknesses, they do not challenge the school rigorously enough about its academic performance.

- The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily with the exception of some items that are missing from the documentation to parents.

Commentary

31. The headteacher took up her appointment in January 2004 and is still in her first year in the post. Previously she had been deputy headteacher and had a full-time teaching commitment with little time to exercise management responsibility. She is aware that pupils' standards by the time they leave the school, as exemplified by National Curriculum test results nationally and compared to similar schools, are not high enough. It also came as no great surprise to her that inspection found standards in English and science to be below those expected, although better than the recent test results would suggest. Even allowing for the relatively short time since her appointment however, not enough has been done to bring about improvements; but she is not complacent and is determined to do so. This is reflected in her vision, which is to improve the school and to raise standards to enable all groups of pupils to do their best.
32. Some of the key priorities are correctly identified in the school improvement plan such as "to improve the monitoring and evaluation by subject co-ordinators" and "to organise the management team so that it has a focus on carrying out agreed improvements and monitoring progress". Improvements to the school's procedures for assessing pupils are also identified as a priority. However, there is a large gulf between intention and practice and practice is not consistent. The role of the co-ordinators, for example, was identified as an area for development at the last inspection, so that systems should be put in place to enable them to monitor their subjects. This still remains the case, although there are notable exceptions, such as the Foundation Stage, art and design and ICT. The area of special educational needs is also particularly well managed. These pupils are supported well and fully integrated into the life of the school. But in many subjects, the co-ordinators do not monitor either teachers' planning in their subjects, or sample pupils' work in books. The result is that they are not aware of whether the approved schemes of work are being fully taught or of the quality of pupils' work throughout the school.
33. The chair of governors has been in the post for just over a year and was vice-chair before that. She leads the governing body satisfactorily, works hard and has an adequate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governors are committed to the success of the school but until recently, they were unaware of how much the school had to do to catch up with schools in similar circumstances. As a result, they have been unaware of the need to challenge the school rigorously enough about its academic performance and question what improvements are to be made. Many of the governors are relatively new to the school. They need to shape the direction of the school more constructively. The school's documentation to parents is clear and easy to use. However, the governors' annual report to parents has several items missing that are statutorily required to be reported on, such as information about school security and a description of the arrangements for pupils with disabilities.
34. Despite these weaknesses, there is a good atmosphere for learning in the school and it is managed satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis. However, although procedures to

assess the staff's performance are in place, they are insufficiently linked to monitoring pupils' standards and progress. In senior management meetings, not enough time is taken to use information about pupils' progress, where it exists, to ensure pupils who need additional support actually receive it.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	991,672	Balance from previous year	6,344
Total expenditure	967,074	Balance carried forward to the next year	23,998
Expenditure per pupil	2,626		

35. The finance committee manages the budget well. The governing body is committed to making provision for a relatively high number of support staff for pupils with special educational needs and others and to maintaining the nursery which, until recently, has required significant sums from the school's resources. But the balance carried forward is barely prudent as a reserve to cover contingencies. The school secretary manages the budget effectively on a daily basis. The responsible officer conducts an internal audit every term and reports to the governing body accordingly.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The good provision and quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last inspection. Children achieve well in both the nursery and reception classes. Attainment on entry to reception is broadly average but this varies from year to year. In the current cohort for example, attainment in the nursery is above average. The time children spend in the nursery is variable with some children only having one term. The school plans to change this arrangement and ensure children have a minimum of one year in the nursery. Children make good progress overall and by the time they leave reception the majority are on course to achieve the goals they are expected to reach, with the majority likely to be working on National Curriculum levels. In the nursery, 34 children attend part-time and there are 30 children in the reception class. After Christmas, children will move from the nursery to form another reception class. There are four children with special educational needs and there is one child who is speaking English as a second language in the nursery. There is good provision and support for these children and they make the same progress as their peers.

The quality of teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage with very good teaching in the nursery and some areas of learning. Activities are carefully planned to ensure children enjoy the interesting and challenging activities. All adults work well together to provide good learning opportunities. There are good arrangements when children start school and the transition from nursery to reception and in turn to Year 1, is carefully planned. In each class, a qualified teacher is supported by either a nursery nurse or a classroom assistant. A significant number of parents make a regular contribution helping with activities such as painting and outdoor activities and these parents are included in training activities. Procedures to check on children's progress and their use in guiding planning are good.

The Foundation Stage is well led. The resources and accommodation are satisfactory, but there is no cover in the outdoor play area in reception. Although the indoor and outdoor area in the nursery is very cramped, adults have worked extremely hard to make it a stimulating and attractive learning area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children achieve well in both the nursery and reception classes and they make good progress.
- Children form very good relationships with adults and enjoy coming to school

Commentary

36. Children make good progress and achieve well. More able children are already achieving the expected goals and all children are on course to achieve them by the end of the reception year because the quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

The nursery provides a very stimulating learning environment and as a result, children develop a positive attitude to learning. Adults establish very good relationships with children and their parents and this contributes to the firm foundations. Children enjoy coming to school and soon learn to play alongside and with other children. Good planning ensures children experience interesting and challenging activities that they enjoy and that help them develop their concentration and curiosity of the world around them. Adults are enthusiastic and constantly striving to enrich the learning experiences. In the nursery children learn to be sensitive to the needs of others when they are encouraged to look after the giant African snails Sally and Sam. This enthusiasm continues well in the reception class where children are thrilled to see a balloon travel along some string. Children learn to behave appropriately because there are clear guidelines and expectations of behaviour. They begin to learn about healthy food when they are encouraged to eat healthy snacks at break times.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good and reflects the very good teaching.
- There are well-planned opportunities for children to extend their speaking and reading skills.

Commentary

37. Children make good progress and they are on course to have achieved the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1, with the majority likely to be working on National Curriculum levels. The child with English as a second language is making very good progress in the nursery. Speaking skills are good because all adults seize every opportunity to talk to children, use questions well and encourage them to communicate and extend their language skills. Very good teaching in the nursery ensures children develop their confidence and competence communicating with others. The majority of children are able to talk in sentences and used the past tense correctly when describing the school firework party. When expressing likes and dislikes, they are able to give reasons for their opinions. Children in reception continue to develop their conversational skills in the role-play areas, communicating in different roles such as the 'small baby' and the 'school secretary'.
38. Children make very good progress learning to read in reception and their skills are good. All children can talk about and identify their favourite books and give simple reasons why they like them. A more able child likes Pinocchio and he readily talks about the story and the characters. Children in the nursery develop a positive attitude to books and stories and benefit from the attractive book corners and their teacher's readiness to share books with them. Children make good progress learning to write and mark paper in both the nursery and reception classes because there are many exciting opportunities to develop this skill. Nursery children make patterns with attractive firework markers and reception children are encouraged to write party invitations.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.

COMMENTARY

39. The children make good progress and achieve well in both the nursery and reception classes. By the end of the reception year most children will achieve the expected goals and will be working on National Curriculum levels. Children make good progress in their ability to count and identify numbers because there is a strong emphasis on this area of learning. Songs are used well in both the nursery and reception to help children count up and down. Nursery children recognise and count numbers up to five. They sing '5 little rockets' and the majority manage to show the correct number of fingers for rockets decreasing from five. Registration time is used well to extend number work and reception children are challenged to identify how many children are present if three children are absent. A more able child calculated the correct answer. They all have a good understanding of comparative size because the teacher challenges them to recognise hiding places for the toy POG. They compare the size of POG with the size of the hiding place and use language such as short, tall and tallest. Good teaching ensures learning is reinforced in the outdoor areas and children in reception record the number of successful times they threw the ball into the tall, middle and shortest box. Most children recognise basic shapes and more able children identify octagons and pentagons and write numbers up to ten.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The stimulating learning environment contributes to good achievement throughout the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

40. The learning environment is very stimulating and contributes to good achievement. In the nursery the process of growing plants and raising snails stimulates children's curiosity about growing things. Children observe Nettie the newt and learn to care for Sam the Snail brushing the soil from his shell and feeding him fruit. There is great joy as Sam emerges from his shell. There are plenty of opportunities for children to observe, touch and feel different objects such as stones, wood and shells and so gain knowledge of their world. Children develop a positive attitude and make good progress learning to use the readily available computers. Children make very good progress in this area of learning as a result of very good teaching. In reception, children are aware that people in various countries speak different languages. They sing simple songs in Spanish and more able children know how to say hello in

Japanese. They all know the days of the week as the teacher talks about this every day and they are encouraged to check the weather and describe the daily weather conditions. Reception children realise how effective air can be when they observe their balloon travel along a piece of string. Children in both the nursery and reception celebrate bonfire night and learn about the history. Nursery children know Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament and as a result bonfire night is celebrated every year on 5th November.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outdoor area is limited in the nursery but adults make good use of the field and playground.

Commentary

41. By the end of the reception year most children will achieve the expected goals in this area of learning because teachers ensure a good balance of teacher directed and child initiated activities. Children in reception develop their physical skills well by riding, climbing, sliding, hanging, balancing and swinging. More able children confidently climb the slide and swing down the fireman's pole. They ride bikes and scooters with control. They all manage to change for lessons in the hall and they use space well. Clear teaching points from the teacher ensure they move around carefully and start and stop on command. They are able to find their own space and walk on different parts of their feet such as heels and toes. The teacher challenges them well and they move with small steps and learn to extend their stride with very large steps. Adults compensate for the limited outdoor space in the nursery by using the field. Children develop their running skills chasing across the field flying their own rockets and streamers. All children throughout the Foundation Stage experience a rich range of opportunities to increase their skills in using small tools such as pencils, scissors and brushes. They are encouraged to shape and join materials.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for children to use their imagination through role-play activities.

Commentary

42. Achievement is good in this area of learning because children experience a rich assortment of learning experiences and teaching is good. Artwork on display indicates good opportunities to use and mix paint in a variety of ways. Very good teaching in the nursery encourages children to use toothbrushes to apply paint when

making a colourful firework picture. Many children in the nursery know their colours and most children explain that red and white make pink and red and yellow make orange. Children enjoy the well-planned role-play areas such as building the bonfire and consequently have good opportunities to use their imagination. There are good opportunities to play musical instruments and to sing. Nursery children learn to identify and make different sounds, striking and shaking the plastic bottles containing materials such as pebbles and shells. The quality of singing in reception is good; children sing tunefully and with expression. They accompany their singing with simple movements and clapping and learn a range of songs.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 6 are below those expected for pupils of this age.
- There are inconsistencies in planning and teaching in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good.
- Procedures to check on pupils' progress are inconsistent and are not used in planning to take account of the needs of all groups of pupils.

Commentary

43. Standards in English by the end of Year 6 are not high enough. There has been a decline in standards over the past year so that in the 2004 tests, Year 6 pupils achieved results that were well below average compared to both national standards and those in similar schools. Inspection finds that the pupils in the current Year 6 are not attaining expected standards. The school has not maintained the standards in English found in the last inspection. In Year 2, the 2004 results were in line with the national picture in reading and were above the national average in writing. Inspection findings are that standards attained by pupils in Year 2 are broadly as expected for pupils' ages in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
44. As in Year 2, pupils' speaking and listening skills are broadly in line with those expected in Year 6. They understand what is required of them and when provided with the opportunity, are keen to answer questions and share their knowledge. In Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory vocabulary and can provide short answers in reasonable detail. For example, in ICT lessons, pupils of all ages can use technical terms appropriately to explain what they are doing and are given good opportunities to do so. In Years 3 to 6, there is not always enough emphasis in helping pupils develop their ideas in well-planned discussion sessions, to enable their speaking skills to develop in line with their ability. Lower attaining pupils achieve well where teaching assistants support them to understand what is required and help them rehearse their ideas.

45. Standards of reading are in line with those expected in Year 2 but below those expected of pupils in Year 6. Where guided reading sessions in Years 3 to 6 are well prepared, pupils' understanding of a range of reading material is developed well through activities to learn different skills, such as research, comprehension or summarising. However, some lower attaining readers find more complex class texts more difficult and because work is not adapted to their needs, they do not achieve as much. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good within targeted withdrawal groups and helps them to achieve well.
46. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and shows good consistency. There is good guidance from the co-ordinator. There are clear signs of joint planning and a good understanding of how to build on pupils' knowledge and skills. Literacy sessions are effective with a good balance of well-chosen activities that interest and stimulate pupils. Guided reading sessions taught outside of the literacy hour help pupils to develop a good range of reading and spelling skills, with an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' phonic knowledge. Longer reading sessions are held weekly, although only one was observed – in Year 2. During this period, pupils' interest and concentration began to wane, as it was not as effective as the shorter daily sessions.
47. Standards of writing are broadly in line with those expected in Year 2, but below those expected in Year 6. The most significant weakness in Years 3 to 6 is the variation in the quality of teaching, the impact of different teaching styles and lack of consistency of planning. This is reflected in work that is unfinished; writing that lacks substance or the development of ideas; and writing by higher attaining pupils that fails to challenge them. With some exceptions, written comments do not help pupils to evaluate their work so that they know what to do to improve. This has a negative impact on the quality and range of writing that pupils undertake and limits the development of skills that would enable them to reach higher standards in tests. Teachers are not using the scheme of work well enough to ensure there is good continuity and progress in the skills and knowledge needed to do well in the subject. In some year groups, notably in Year 4 and Year 6 there is little match between the work done in the two classes, containing pupils of the same age. Planning is not guided by accurate assessment that would provide information on what pupils know and can do and what they need to do next. Generally, work is not adapted well enough for the needs of lower or higher attaining pupils. Although teaching assistants provide good support to different groups, there is not always a good match between pupils' ability and tasks pupils are set.
48. However, in Year 3 and Year 5 teaching is better. There is evidence of better joint planning and a good understanding of what is required, including the development of pupils' knowledge and skills. Pupils' books provide evidence of a good range of writing and in Year 5 there are good links between structure and grammar and the writing outcomes. The co-ordinator with responsibility for Years 3 to 6 has tried to bring some consistency to the way teachers approach the subject. She has developed thorough assessment procedures and ensured that all teachers know where their pupils are at and what pupils' individual targets are. Not all teachers are using these. Nor are all teachers using the guidance to ensure work is headed with the lesson objective so that pupils and teachers can evaluate how well pupils have achieved. The co-ordinator is well aware of the need to bring about greater consistency and is in the process of establishing priorities for improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. In contrast to the quality of writing found in pupils' books in Years 3 to 6, project work on history and geography topics is well presented and neat. Imaginative and factual writing is well developed and appropriate to the task and demonstrates writing for different purposes and audiences. Individual research is used well to help pupils present a range of information. There is less evidence of ICT skills being used to present work or to allow pupils to draft and edit. Pupils' literacy skills are not used enough in science or religious education.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

50. French is taught from Years 2 to 6, with increasing amounts timetabled as the pupils get older. In Year 6, pupils are taught in half-hour sessions per week. Only two lessons were observed and insufficient evidence was available to make an overall judgement on provision. In a satisfactory session in Year 5, the pupils were given good opportunities to practise their pronunciation and to consolidate their vocabulary giving answers in French to questions such as '*Quel age as-tu?*' and '*Comment t'appelle-tu?*' Most pupils were reasonably confident responding with the appropriate phrases, such as, '*J'ai dix ans*' or '*Je m'appelle..*'. In Year 6 the pupils were motivated well as they continued with last week's lesson on '*in a café*'. They were introduced to '*froid*' and '*chaud*'. They rehearsed their knowledge of numbers and repeated in unison numbers in multiples of ten in response to the teacher's prompting using flash cards. When challenged individually, about half the class were confident giving the French for 70, 80 or 90. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, responded well, enjoyed this good lesson and made good progress.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Numeracy Strategy is used consistently throughout the school.
- Assessment is insufficiently used to guide teacher planning.

Commentary

51. The results of national tests taken at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 show that standards over the last few years have been variable. In both key stages they have broadly been in line with national averages but below those of similar schools in Year 6. Work seen during the inspection suggests that the present Year 2 cohort is attaining expected standards and that Year 6 is working at above expected standards. These pupils are achieving satisfactorily taking into account their previous attainment. These standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection.
52. In Year 2, work in pupils' books indicates that a reasonable range of work has been covered including number, time, shape space and measures. Some of the higher

attaining pupils understand place value up to three digits and are able to separate such numbers into hundreds, tens and units. Most are able to measure in centimetres and know some of the characteristics of simple two-dimensional shapes. In a lesson where pupils were folding a paper shape into halves, most were able to write the fraction correctly and a minority were able to understand how to make quarters by folding it again. In another lesson most were able to choose coins to make up to 20p but only a few grasped the notion of making the amount with the fewest number of coins. Work in the books of pupils in Year 6 indicates that a range of topics have been covered including factors and prime numbers, fractions and percentages, ratio and proportion, graphs and pie charts and area and perimeter. Pupils' work is presented well. In a lesson in a higher set most pupils were able to carry out complex tasks using co-ordinates and negative numbers. In a lesson in the lower set, pupils were able to suggest a good range of strategies for making numbers up to the nearest 100 or 1,000 and a few confidently carried out a similar operation using decimal fractions.

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good lessons and one that was unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers make learning objectives clear and target questions and tasks accurately at different ability groups, while giving appropriate challenge to the higher attaining pupils. They engage the attention and interest of the pupils and lessons proceed at a good pace. In less effective lessons, teachers are not planning well enough to inspire pupils; work is not matched as well as it should be to pupils' needs and therefore does not maintain their interest. Tasks tend to be aimed at the middle group with the result that high attaining pupils are not challenged and low attaining pupils are left behind. This is mitigated to some extent by the presence of skilled support assistants in most lessons. This is particularly beneficial for pupils with special educational needs who often receive good support and make satisfactory progress.
54. Pupils' attitudes are generally very positive. They try hard and work together sensibly in groups or pairs. Most use their speaking skills confidently and particularly enjoy the first part of each lesson when challenged with oral and mental problems. Pupils of all ages often volunteer to demonstrate their ideas in front of the class without fear of being mocked if they get something wrong, as a result of the good relationships between the staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves.
55. A start has been made on tracking pupils' progress and there has been some analysis of test results to identify the weaker areas, but currently teachers lack the assessment information they need to help all pupils develop their skills and knowledge systematically. The setting arrangements by ability in the top three years are good and these, combined with some good teaching towards the top end of school, help to explain why pupils make sound progress despite the lack of assessment information. The joint co-ordinators are aware of the problem but have not been able to take the necessary action to remedy the situation. As a result, the leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

56. Mathematics is soundly developed through other areas of the curriculum, but it is insufficiently used in science. There are good examples of cross-curricular work in the

lower years involving measuring, counting and displaying information on graphs. Geometric shapes are used in artwork and lessons in the computer suite often involve programs using shapes and numbers.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Year 6 is unsatisfactory, including the quality of pupils' recorded work.
- Procedures to check pupils' progress are not consistently used to guide teachers' planning.
- The school has improved provision for investigative work since the last inspection.

Commentary

57. In the 2004 national test results for pupils in Year 6, standards were well below those expected nationally. Since the last inspection the school has improved opportunities for investigative work but standards have declined by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6.
58. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. In Year 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain standards that are currently in line with those expected. Pupils make sound progress learning about different materials and identifying whether they are natural or man-made. They are guided to place objects into categories of plants, animals, earth, metal and man-made. Most pupils know that exercise is good for health and can talk about the effect of exercise on the body. Work is linked well with art and design and design and technology and pupils make attractive figures in a range of action poses and posters encouraging others to *'Keep fit, keep healthy'*. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their peers. No difference was identified between the achievement of boys and girls.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in the older classes although there are instances of good teaching. There are marked variations between some classes, including the two in Year 6. For example, in one class standards are in line with those expected and this reflects good teaching, but in the other standards are below those expected. In a good lesson in Year 6, pupils were able to explain how to separate a solution of soluble and insoluble substances and there was good use of ICT. Some pupils in Year 6 plan and create an attractive display board to show the life cycle of a flowering plant using computers to light up each section and, as a result, reinforce their learning about pollination, seed dispersal and parts of a plant well. There is also disparity in the work in pupils' books in different classes. In some books there is no evidence of marking and no challenge to write up investigations in a scientific way. Pupils do not explain reasons for conclusions and in some instances there are no conclusions at all.
60. As pupils progress through the school they get more opportunities to practise investigative work, but not all learn to work in a systematic and scientific way. Consequently standards of recorded work are not as good as they should be and in

some classes they are poor. This is particularly the case with regard to the quality of the presentation. This lack of rigour is reflected in pupils' knowledge. In discussion with pupils in Year 6, they revealed that they did not fully understand the significance of a fair test and were unable to explain it. Some have not learnt basic scientific procedures to be followed when investigating scientific ideas and do not mention the importance of hypothesis and predictions. Many teachers use too many worksheets and consequently more able pupils are not challenged to expand their ideas in writing. Teaching assistants support pupils well and help lower attaining pupils access their work.

61. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2. The co-ordinator for the older classes has only recently been appointed but action taken to improve standards in the older classes has not been effective enough. There is an action plan to develop science but there has been no monitoring of teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching by the specialist teaching assistant results in very good learning.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons in ICT and are using computers with growing confidence.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in classrooms to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

62. Standards are in line with those expected in Year 2 and Year 6. Facilities have improved since the last inspection with the development of a well-equipped ICT suite and a laptop and projector which are used very well for demonstration purposes. The specialist teaching assistant takes the majority of lessons in the ICT suite and the quality of teaching is very good. Lesson planning ensures a logical progression in the development of skills. The time is used very well to ensure there is a good balance between teaching and hands-on activities. Because instructions are very clear and resources well prepared, no time is lost. Lesson objectives are achieved with time to consolidate and review learning, which is a considerable achievement in the limited time available – only 30 minutes for each group, as there are only enough computers for half a class to work on. Achievement is good because pupils have been very well trained so that they are confident when using the keyboard and mouse, accessing programs and using the toolbar. Pupils behave very well; they are attentive to the teacher and follow instructions confidently. They are thrilled when they learn new skills, such as in Year 5 during a very good introduction to spreadsheets, when they saw the numbers automatically add up.
63. The specialist teaching assistant and a class teacher share co-ordination of the subject. The scheme of work ensures that pupils build up their knowledge and skills progressively and enables the co-ordinators to monitor the progress of particular groups. Procedures are in place for pupils to assess their own progress by keeping a

computer record on disk. However, progress in putting this fully in place has been disrupted by damage to the suite during building work earlier in the year. This also stopped the computer club. The school has purchased a flexible range of resources, including digital cameras, control software, interactive whiteboards and overhead digital projectors. The installation of the interactive whiteboards is recent and some staff are not yet fully confident in using them and this limits their impact on learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

64. Displays around the school and in portfolios of work show some satisfactory evidence of ICT being used to support learning in other subjects: for example, the use of digital photography to record visits; a control circuit to illustrate the life cycle of a flowering plant; and evidence of Internet research in history and geography projects. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use the technology to draft, edit and present their work in English. Generally, more use could be made of ICT to assist learning across subjects of the curriculum, such as mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

In geography and history there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision as no lessons were seen in either subject. Four lessons were observed in religious education. In addition, pupils' previous work was analysed, the agreed syllabus was examined and a meeting took place with the co-ordinator.

65. In **geography** and **history**, an examination of pupils' work in Years 3 to 6 provides good evidence of teaching that enables pupils to use a wide variety of knowledge and skills from different disciplines to cover a topic in depth. Project books provide examples of very well-presented work which reflects a good understanding of different topics, such as Britain at War, Tudor Explorers and the Earls Colne Railway. Good quality drawings and maps illustrate pupils' work and a range of writing allows for them to practise their literacy skills. Internet research and the results of individual enquiry demonstrate that pupils acquire good skills in setting their own questions and researching answers. Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills are on occasion provided, for example in using graphs in their geography work.
66. The scheme of work indicates that the requirements of the National Curriculum are covered. Procedures for checking on the progress of pupils' work are not yet developed to provide a record of what pupils have done and how well they have understood the different topics.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve satisfactorily and are broadly meeting the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Pupils are not encouraged enough to record what they have learned in writing.

Commentary

67. The broadly satisfactory standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily. An analysis of pupils' work reveals that even allowing for the time of the year in which the inspection took place, with only the first half of the Autumn term being completed, there is less work in pupils' books than is normally expected. This tends to reflect the fact that in some classes there is much less time devoted to the subject than that recommended by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and in these classes it is difficult to see how the full syllabus will be covered within the time allocated.
68. In Year 2, the lesson observed was shorter than planned, as the preceding lesson in physical education had over run. Pupils were studying festivals with Diwali being highlighted and they showed satisfactory knowledge of Hindu customs. Teaching was satisfactory overall, although the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard when introducing the concept of festivals. However, the pupils did not make as much progress as could be expected as the session was too rushed.
69. In a well-planned lesson in Year 6, the lesson objectives were to understand the significance of the Sefer Torah and how it is highly sacred to the Jewish people. Pupils were very interested in this topic and this was shown by the pertinent questions they asked such as, 'Was Jesus a Jew or a Christian?' They were able to say that the Sefer Torah is written in Hebrew. Teaching was satisfactory overall. The teacher had good subject knowledge but pupils only made satisfactory progress as the lesson was too short.
70. Pupils do too little writing in religious education. The work also shows that there is little joint planning between the parallel classes and there are significant differences in the quality and quantity of work, for example in the two classes in Year 6. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Although the co-ordinator has good subject knowledge, she does not monitor either the standards of pupils' work throughout the school or teachers' planning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

With the exception of art and design, there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision in the other subjects in this area of learning. One lesson was observed in design and technology and physical education and two were observed in music, including a hymn practice.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve above average standards throughout the school.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge.
- Leadership of the subject is good.

Commentary

71. One of the first things to strike a visitor to the school is the abundance and variety of good quality artwork displayed around the building. Examples of work in the entrance lobby and in the hall are from all year groups and demonstrate clearly that pupils make good gains in skills and knowledge as they move through the school. There are brightly coloured rainbow fish collages produced by Year 1 and three-dimensional work using the techniques of batik and appliqué by Year 2 pupils. In Year 3, pupils have created some delightful flower paintings using the principles of perspective to create depth and the influence of surrealism is clear in the way some Year 4 pupils have drawn fish from different viewpoints. By the time they reach Years 5 and 6 the growing confidence of the pupils is clearly shown in the skilled way they use wire and papier-mâché to create characters from a story or make skilful use of tone and shade in drawings of musical instruments.
72. Crucial to these high standards is the confidence and expertise of the teaching staff. As a result, they succeed in providing a good range of stimulating activities that involve exploring visual and tactile qualities in a variety of materials and processes. There is a strong emphasis on using the ideas of well-known artists. For instance, in one of the two lessons observed, pupils in Year 6 were studying the work of Georgia O'Keefe and their subsequent efforts to draw and paint a close up view of a poppy showed clearly the influence of the artist's bold use of shape and colour. In the other lesson in Year 5, pupils looked at the work of several artists before attempting their own drawings of a Tudor galleon using techniques such as cross-hatching or pointillism. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, benefit from the challenging but relaxed atmosphere in the lessons. Many pupils identified art as their favourite subject in the school. Art is used well particularly in subjects such as history and geography, where standards of illustration are very good.
73. The co-ordinator is a very good role model and is enthusiastic and expert. The curriculum is enriched through activities such as joint arts-weeks with other schools, where links with musicians, sculptors and artists are often exploited well. The school has its own kiln and an expert teacher of clay modelling spends one afternoon a week at the school, so all the pupils get the chance to experience pottery and clay sculpting. The co-ordinator also runs a weekly art club that enables pupils to try different techniques, such as screen-printing. Resources are good and are used well.
74. In **design and technology**, in addition to the one lesson observed, it is clear from talking to pupils and analysing teachers' planning, that the subject has had a very low profile in the school over the last few years. At the last inspection, the design and

evaluation elements were found to be taught inconsistently and this still remains the case. In the lesson observed in Year 4, pupils' skills in making were satisfactory, but in their designs for a money container, very few had considered whom it might be for or its fitness for the intended purpose. For example, the difference in designing a container for coins or for notes had not been considered. Some good skills were evident in art related topics, for instance in the making of 'character' models or clay towers, but available evidence suggests there is a lack of systematic development of skills and knowledge and discussion with pupils reveals their knowledge of the main elements is very limited.

75. In **music**, the emphasis is on singing, but evidence from the school indicates that the statutory curriculum is being followed, although not consistently so. For example in Year 3 last year, as part of the pupils' information and technology curriculum, pupils used the technology to set rhythmic poems to music, using simple percussion repeating patterns. There is evidence of good work with pupils using symbols in a program to create and play repeating patterns. In a short session in Year 5 taken by the co-ordinator, who accompanied them well on an electronic keyboard, pupils sang songs from various countries satisfactorily, although with little enthusiasm. In a good session in the hall for all the pupils from Years 3 to 6, led by the co-ordinator, they began learning new carols in preparation for Christmas. The teacher did well to ask this large group about their understanding of the meaning of unusual words such as 'holpen', 'hath' and 'ewes' in *Masters in this Hall* and to expand on their answers when appropriate. As a result the group were well prepared to tackle this carol and they did so effectively. Teaching and learning were good and pupils' singing was of a good quality. Music plays a significant part in activities outside the school day. Some pupils receive tuition on keyboards and singing has a high profile in the termly drama productions. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. The current scheme of work is out of date and there is a lack of direction given to teachers as to what they should be teaching. The co-ordinator monitors neither the quality of pupils' work, nor the quality of teachers' planning.
76. In **physical education**, in addition to the lesson in Year 1, a football session taken by members of Colchester United Football Club was also observed in Year 6. Some after school activities were observed and discussions with pupils and staff also took place. The subject effectively contributes to promoting healthy lifestyles and the school has received a healthy schools award. It is not surprising that pupils demonstrate good knowledge of the effect of exercise on the body.
77. In the sessions observed, pupils demonstrated good skills. Discussion with pupils in Year 6 indicates a good understanding of attack and defence strategies in competitive games. These pupils showed good ball control and most pupils managed to perform skilful attacking strategies in the football session. Pupils achieve well in swimming as they have their own pool and use the local swimming pool to extend the skills of older pupils. Pupils in Year 2 are good at skipping because teachers encourage these skills and pupils have access to skipping ropes during informal break times.
78. A significant number of pupils attend the extra-curricular clubs. These sessions are well planned and organised. They make a good contribution to extending pupils' skills and knowledge. Teaching assistants and coaches give clear and appropriate teaching that helps pupils improve their performance. A forum group of mixed-age pupils

looks after the resources in the hall and the shed. There are good links with the local secondary school and staff visit and work alongside primary teachers. Resources and accommodation are good and contribute to the overall provision. There are good opportunities to meet pupils from other schools and school teams achieve well in inter-school competitions.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

79. There is inconsistency in the way this curriculum area is planned for and timetabled, with some classes having regular sessions for example, and others only occasional lessons. The co-ordinator, who only recently took over the role, has not yet had an opportunity to monitor how this area is taught or how much emphasis each teacher is giving to the subject. As a result, it is not clear how progression is ensured. Visitors such as the school nurse, talk to older pupils about puberty. Personal safety is emphasised through visits from fire and road safety experts and an afternoon spent looking at potential hazards. The weekly forum meetings contribute to pupils' development through the emphasis on caring for the school community and working as a team.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5

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

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	5
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	5
The leadership of other key staff	5
The effectiveness of management	5

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