

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FELSTED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Felsted, Dunmow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114875

Headteacher: Mrs S Ruck

Lead inspector: Mr T Richardson

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Inspection number: 266817

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 4 to 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 241

School address: Watch House Green  
Felsted  
Dunmow  
Essex  
Postcode: CM6 3EB

Telephone number: 01371 820215  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mr J Goldwyn  
governors:

Date of previous 25<sup>th</sup> January 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a community primary school for boys and girls aged four to eleven. The population in the area is growing and the school is expanding every year. It is currently of average size with 241 pupils (131 boys and 110 girls) and 10 classes. The continued growth of the school results in uneven numbers of pupils in each year group and some classes contain pupils of different ages. The socio-economic background of the pupils is broadly average and children enter the reception class with attainment that is also average. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is below average and there are fewer pupils with special educational needs than in similar schools. The main special educational needs of pupils are moderate and specific learning difficulties; social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; and speech and communication difficulties. Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds and there are four pupils who are in the advanced stages of acquiring English as an additional language. Currently, the school is involved in the Leadership Development Strategy and has gained an Achievement Award and the Investors in People award. At the time of the inspection, consultations were taking place regarding the future of primary education in Felsted.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16500	Mr T Richardson	Lead inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology (ICT); art and design; music; special educational needs
9079	Mrs A Moss	Lay inspector	
1963	Ms S Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English; geography; history; religious education; English as an additional language
32133	Mrs J Elton	Team inspector	Science; design and technology; physical education; areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is **very effective**. Pupils achieve well in the subjects of the curriculum and show very good achievement in their personal development. Relationships within the school are excellent and there is a high degree of happiness. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and the school is led and managed very well. The school is improving its quality whilst continually expanding and gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher results in every individual being valued.
- The quality of teaching and learning is enhanced by the very good teamwork between teachers and assistants.
- Pupils feel very well cared for and have very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Leadership roles are devolved very well and there is a shared vision for improvement so that pupils and staff are involved in self-evaluation and always striving to do better.
- The continual change, due to the expansion of the school, is a barrier to improvement but is being managed very well.
- The curriculum is enriched very well and there is very good provision in the Foundation Stage.
- The resources and provision for ICT are inadequate and some pupils are underachieving in the subject.
- There are very good links with parents and the community.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The previous key issues have all been fully addressed and there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The school is to be commended for continuing to improve whilst expanding, as it now has 50 per cent more pupils on roll than when last inspected. All staff are committed to providing the best for the pupils and the school has a very good capacity to continue to improve.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**Achievement is good.** Standards for most pupils are above average in English, mathematics and science. The 2004 data above includes a significant proportion (one fifth) of pupils who arrived during Years 3 to 6 with lower attainment. These pupils also show good achievement against their prior attainment, but lower the overall grade for the school.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with broadly average attainment, and well below average skills in phonics and numeracy. They achieve very well and are likely to enter Year 1 having exceeded the goals expected for their age. Pupils currently in Year 2 show good achievement over their attainment on entry to Year 1, and have standards in reading that are well above average, with above average standards in writing, mathematics and science. The pupils in Year 6 are achieving well when their current performance is compared with how well they did in Year 2, and their 2005 test results are likely to be above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils who have been in the school since Year 1 generally achieve very well over time, and often demonstrate standards that are well above average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in class, although their test results are sometimes different. The only weakness in standards is in ICT. The school has chosen to invest in new classrooms rather than in ICT equipment and, as a result, there are not enough computers or software for pupils to have sufficient practice to improve their skills.

**Pupils develop very good personal qualities.** Relationships in school are excellent, staff set a very good example and the very caring ethos leads to pupils being happy in their learning and behaving very well. Pupils are very willing to show initiative and take responsibility and enjoy doing so. Attendance and punctuality are good. All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good and racial harmony is promoted very well.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good** in all classes. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and also know the learning needs of their pupils very well so that lessons are continually moving pupils forward in their development. Teachers and assistants work together very well and very effectively help pupils to overcome any difficulties they may have in their understanding. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the very good provision and quality of the specialist teaching and support they receive. Procedures for assessment are very good and pupils are confident in what they do well and what they are working to improve. Teachers involve pupils very well in learning to do things for themselves and pupils are closely involved in setting their targets for what they should learn next.

The curriculum is enriched very well with a wide range of clubs that extends pupils' interests and learning outside lessons. Pupils have excellent and trusting relationships with all adults and the school does much to seek and act upon pupils' views. There are very good links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges. However, the school population is expanding faster than its buildings and the provision for a library, storage and outdoor play has yet to be completed.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher's outstanding leadership is improving the quality of education and leads to a strong ethos for the valuing of all individuals. Self-evaluation procedures are accurate and very good and everyone in school takes responsibility for developing and improving their work. The governors give very good support, make sure all statutory requirements are met, and are actively involved, interested and enthusiastic. The continued expansion of the school is a barrier to sustained improvement but the school community is working very well together to seek to provide, at all times, the very best they can for the pupils.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the work of the school. Pupils are happy and hold their school in high regard. The school council is very effective and is fully involved in school improvement.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards in ICT and ensure it is used routinely by pupils and staff in all subjects.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Standards are above average. Children in the reception class achieve very well and pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils show good individual 'added value' over their time in school.
- Test results are distorted by the large proportion of pupils who are new to the school each year.
- Pupils who have been in the school since the reception class are achieving very well in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards in ICT are below average in Year 6 because some pupils are underachieving.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school's performance data, based on the results of national tests, is misleading. The population of the school is increasing each year, and most of the pupils who join the school do so with lower attainment than the pupils who have been present since the reception class. This lowers the average points scores on which the comparisons of test results are based. Detailed analysis of the performance of individual pupils shows that:
  - Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well, and standards are rising, but this has yet to fully show in the Year 2 national tests.
  - Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well compared to their attainment on entry and their standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are above average.
  - Pupils who enter the school at times other than the usual time of admission achieve well and show good added value over their attainment on entry.
  - Pupils in Year 6 who have been at the school since Year 1 achieve very well over time and generally have standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above average.
  - Pupils with special educational needs achieve well against the targets in their individual education plans.
  - Higher attaining, and gifted and talented pupils show good achievement over time.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.7 (16.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.5 (16.2)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.8 (17.0)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. The 2004 Year 2 test results show that standards in reading were well above the national average and that standards in writing and mathematics were above average.

This represents good achievement for these pupils as their attainment on entry to the school was broadly average. When compared to the test results for similar schools (with similar numbers of pupils with free school meals) the reading results are above average; writing results are average, and the mathematics results are below average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.2 (28.6)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.7 (26.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.8 (30.9)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. The Year 6 2004 test results show that standards in English and mathematics match the national average and that standards in science are above average. When these results are compared with similar schools (where pupils had similar test scores when they were in Year 2) then the English and mathematics results are above average, with the science results well above average. These test results also show that good 'added value' has taken place for these pupils between Years 3 and 6.
4. Inspection shows that children enter the Foundation Stage with attainment that is broadly average, although in creative development their attainment is below average. In addition, one third of the children enter the reception class with well below average attainment in their phonic and number skills. The children currently in the reception class show very good achievement, are catching up very fast, and are likely to enter Year 1 with standards above average in most of the areas of learning. The pupils currently in Year 2 show good added value and achievement over their attainment on entry and are likely to have results in the 2005 national tests that are above average. The pupils in Year 6 are achieving well over their performance when in Year 2 and their test results in 2005 are likely to be above average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in lessons although their test results are sometimes different.
5. In English, standards in speaking and listening are above average throughout the school as a result of the emphasis in lessons on pupils discussing their opinions and learning to use increasingly complex vocabulary. Teachers also encourage an enjoyment of books and, as a result, pupils achieve well in reading and gain considerable pleasure from books. Pupils' achievement in writing is due to the many opportunities provided for improving this skill in lessons additional to English so that pupils are able to write in a variety of styles and for a wide range of purposes. Standards in mathematics are above average throughout the school and pupils achieve well, considering their prior attainment. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about mathematics and pupils rise to the challenges set in lessons and are motivated to learn as much as they can. Standards in science are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6, with all pupils achieving well. This is largely due to teachers making very good use of assessment and working successfully to continually build on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding.
6. Other subjects were either sampled, or insufficient lessons were seen to accurately judge achievement and standards. Parents and pupils are confident that pupils work hard, are always challenged to give of their best and are given work that takes their learning forward. However, whilst standards in ICT are average in Year 2, they are below average in Year 6 and some pupils could be achieving more. This is because the school has prioritised new classrooms and teachers for its expanding population and not invested sufficiently in computer equipment and resources. As a result, the school has not kept pace with the advances in other schools over time. The school has

recognised this as an area for improvement and is already implementing appropriate plans to remedy the situation.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school has a very warm and very caring ethos that strongly promotes pupils' very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, their attitudes to school and to learning are very good. Pupils behave very well and attendance is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve well.
- The very caring ethos of the school and the very good example set by the staff contribute to the excellent relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff.
- The spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects of the pupils' development are fostered very well.
- Pupils are very willing to show initiative and take responsibility and are given many opportunities to do so.
- Pupils' attendance levels and punctuality are good.

### Commentary

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and collaborate very well with other children. They listen attentively, undertake tasks enthusiastically and are keen to answer questions. This is particularly noticeable when teachers plan lessons that pupils find interesting and set appropriately challenging tasks that ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment have the opportunity to achieve well. Pupils enjoy school very much and play a full part in school life and the range of activities offered. Attendance levels are good and pupils are punctual to school. Parents are made aware of the school's expectations of them when their children are absent and they work well with the school to promote good attendance.

#### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.0	School data	1.4
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.*

8. Standards of behaviour are very good in classrooms and around the school. All pupils discuss and agree class rules. They are fully aware of the high standards expected and insisted upon by all staff. The very caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. The pupils play harmoniously together at playtimes and no signs of aggressive behaviour were seen during the inspection. A very few pupils noted on their returned questionnaires that there was some bad behaviour at times, but members of the school council confirmed that bullying occurs very rarely, and that any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Racial harmony is promoted very well. There were two exclusions during the past year, and both were recorded and dealt with appropriately.

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	227	2	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

9. Pupils are encouraged to become independent and willingly take on a range of responsibilities appropriate to their age. These include acting as reading buddies, looking after younger children, being play leaders and members of the school council. They co-operate very well when raising funds for others less fortunate than themselves and take their responsibilities of living in a community seriously. They work happily together and show increasing maturity and self-awareness as they progress through the school.
10. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are very well aware of right and wrong. This is because staff give a very positive lead in engendering excellent relationships and, for example, by giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity. Pupils are very proud of their school and are aware that the school is proud of them. Socially the pupils are encouraged to play a full part in their own community and they participate very enthusiastically in the weekly meetings of the school council. Well attended extra-curricular activities enable pupils to develop their social skills effectively. Pair and group activities in lessons allow pupils to learn how to negotiate and manage people and a residential journey for Year 6 pupils enables them to learn about working with others closely. The school ensures all pupils are included very effectively in activities and so they make very good progress in their personal development.
11. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop self-awareness during times for reflection and they assess themselves and their work in lessons. Collective worship allows pupils to learn effectively and develop a sense of empathy with others. They show respect for the feelings of others and enjoy the activities they engage in. Every pupil is valued.
12. Pupils have very good opportunities to understand their own culture and cultures of faraway lands through their learning in subjects such as history, geography, art, music and religious education. These opportunities also include the promotion of a good understanding of other cultures that make up contemporary British society.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is very good. Teaching, learning and assessment are all very good. There is a good curriculum with very good opportunities for enrichment. The school's care,

welfare, health and safety for the pupils are very good; pupils receive very good support and guidance, and are involved very well in school development. There are very good links with parents, other schools and the wider community.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of teaching and learning is consistent throughout the school.
- There is very good teamwork between teachers and assistants.
- Specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils are very well involved in their own learning and assessment.

## Commentary

13. There has been a significant and very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Every lesson observed was at least of good quality and a high proportion of lessons were very good or excellent. This level of quality is evident throughout the school and is a direct result of the ethos set by the headteacher and the teamwork and shared commitment to improvement that this generates among all staff. The morale of teachers is high and they make sure that every pupil is getting the best deal they can from their time in school.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	12 (38%)	19 (59%)	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.*

14. Teachers are knowledgeable and they follow agreed procedures very well. For example, all lessons begin with teachers making clear what pupils are learning today, and what the teacher is looking for. As a result, the pupils know what is expected of them and work hard to achieve the objectives set. Throughout the school, teachers ask pupils to discuss with one another their answers to key questions in the lesson. This leads to pupils having time to develop their thoughts and being able to give more detailed and accurate answers. All teachers mark pupils' work very well and include positive comments about how well a pupil has done, in addition to helpful suggestions for how their work could improve. Teachers also value the contributions that pupils make to lessons and reward them verbally for what they do well rather than continually pointing out their errors. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 4, the teacher preserved the dignity and self-esteem of the pupils by encouraging a pupil who was stuck with an answer to 'phone a friend' and choose someone else in the class who could help. This strategy was very effective, with both pupils feeling proud of their responses as well as learning from each other.
15. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is very good. A particular strength is the way the teacher links activities together so that the children are motivated to take part and learn through their play. For example, in a lesson seen, the theme was 'flowers'. Some children used the digital microscope, others planted sunflower seeds, a group painted sunflowers, children engaged in role play at 'the garden centre' and prepared potted plants, and another group worked with their teacher to experiment on the need plants have for water. As a result, the pupils were all very enthusiastic and the adults intervened skilfully to keep their play focused on the details of what they were observing and doing. This led to the children learning very quickly about the properties of plants and flowers.

16. Inspectors noted very good teamwork between teachers and assistants in all classes. The assistants are involved in helping to plan the lessons and keep records to show what worked well and what could be improved. These notes are then used by the teachers to help with the assessment of the pupils and in planning the activities in future lessons. Assistants help to support and teach groups of pupils and also use their skills to intervene during lessons if pupils are having difficulties in learning. Some assistants have specific talents and these are used very well by the school to provide additional motivation for the pupils. For example, in a music lesson for Year 6, the assistant is a knowledgeable musician and led the introduction to the lesson very well while the teacher took a lesser role. By using music current to the pupils' experiences, the assistant was successful in encouraging the pupils to listen more carefully and to analyse with accuracy the rhythms present in the recording.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and highly skilled at helping the pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. She carries out detailed and accurate assessment and uses this information very well to plan the programmes for supporting the pupils in their classrooms and in separate group lessons when appropriate. Assistants and other teachers are trained very well to carry on this support and the result is that the school is able to identify any pupils who may be having difficulties and intervene early and very effectively to help them keep up in class with the others. In an excellent lesson for a group of pupils with complex learning difficulties, the teacher used a wide range of methods at a very brisk pace. For example, to help the pupils to learn to round numbers up or down she led an 'auction' of toy cars and the successful 'buyer' was the first pupil to round the price correctly to the nearest ten. Prices were carefully chosen so that all the pupils could take part at a level that matched their numeracy skills. Other numerical exercises were introduced in logical and small steps so that the pupils were led to realise, for example, that by looking at the comma they could identify how many thousands were in a number.
18. In all lessons, pupils are involved very well in their own learning. Teachers encourage the pupils to question, think and to find things out for themselves. As a result, pupils know they are learning new things and work hard to find out more. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 5, the teacher asked the pupils to compare published leaflets for 'advice, selling, and information'. By asking logical questions, and not giving direct answers, the teacher led the pupils to discover for themselves the purposes behind each of the leaflets and to realise the style of writing that was used in each case.
19. Assessment is carried out and used very well throughout the school. The deputy headteacher has developed these procedures very well within the last two years. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and to take part in setting the targets for what they should learn next. Teachers keep very good records that show clearly how well each pupil is doing, and use this information routinely to plan lessons that take pupils forward in their learning. Pupils refer to their 'profile books' and can see their achievement over time and gain a sense of how quickly they are making progress. Teachers and senior managers analyse all assessment information and use it very well as part of the self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. An example of these assessment procedures at work was seen in the Year 6 mathematics books. Each piece of work ended with a red / amber / green 'traffic light' and a written comment from the pupil about what they had learnt and any areas they found difficult. The teacher's comments that followed gave praise for the new learning and pointed out how the pupil might overcome their difficulties. Later in the books, specific work was evident to help the pupil move forward in their understanding. As a result of these procedures, pupils are confident in their learning and give effort and concentration to maintain their productivity.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a good curriculum. There are very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment and the accommodation and resources are good overall.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The extra-curricular provision is very good and the wide range of clubs extends pupils' interests and learning outside lessons.
- Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is very inclusive and there is very good equality of opportunity.
- The planning for personal, social and health education is very good.
- There are not enough computers and ICT resources.
- The school population is expanding faster than its buildings and there is a lack of space.

## **Commentary**

20. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, and meets statutory requirements. Above all, it is interesting; because of this, it is motivating and engages pupils. The school offers its pupils many opportunities for reflection through literature, art and music and the legal requirement of a daily act of collective worship is met.
21. The pupils benefit from a very wide range of clubs and activities, before, during and after school hours, which are very well attended. French and Italian clubs broaden pupils' skills and knowledge of languages and cultures other than their own. Sporting and musical activities are very much appreciated, giving pupils many chances to demonstrate and develop their talents. The school is innovative in promoting enjoyment and excellence in learning for its pupils. Each Friday is used to broaden the curriculum and to offer cross-curricular work through topics. The curriculum is enriched further by pupils' visits to places of interest and through visitors to school. These opportunities make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.
22. The school has made very good improvement in tackling the issues identified in the last inspection. Planning of all subjects is now thorough, following the national or local guidance. The school's aim to make learning enjoyable for all pupils is well reflected in teachers' plans and in lessons. Teachers provide good opportunities for speaking and listening in all subjects through discussion, group and paired work. The promotion of writing across the curriculum has been a recent priority of school development, and time is now routinely set aside for it. There are effective links made between subjects such as literacy, art, science and design and technology.
23. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Individual learning needs are assessed very well and early intervention is given to supporting pupils and helping them to overcome any barriers to learning. The pupils who require regular and intensive support benefit from a very good mix of additional help in class and small group or individual tuition away from the classroom. Assistants and teachers receive very good professional advice and training from the special educational needs co-ordinator and pupils with highly specialised needs are very well supported.
24. There is very good equality of access and opportunity. Teachers plan the curriculum and individual lessons so that work is carefully matched to pupils' needs. Overall, teachers ensure the curriculum provides a very clear focus on supporting the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and social skills. The focus on individual pupils and their needs results in all being fully included in the life of the school. Pupils are prepared well for transfer to their next year groups and the strong links with secondary schools, in subjects such as physical education and science, help to provide a smooth transition for pupils to their next schools.

25. The provision for personal development is very good. A good teaching programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship is supported by the school's positive ethos of valuing every individual. This provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on the choices they will have to make as individuals and their role within the community of the class and school.
26. However, there are not enough resources for ICT, and this limits the pupils' achievement. The school makes a very good investment in good quality teachers and support staff, to the benefit of all pupils. The accommodation is generally good but the ICT suite and some rooms are cramped for practical activities; there is no library and insufficient space for storing resources. However, staff and pupils do the best they can with the space available and the school has planned strategically to improve the accommodation for its ever increasing numbers.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school provides a very good standard of health and safety, care and welfare. The support, advice and guidance pupils receive are very good. Pupils are involved very well in school life because the school seeks, values and acts on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils feel very secure and well cared for in school.
- They have excellent and trusting relationships with all adults in the school.
- The school does much to seek pupils' views and acts on them when appropriate.
- Pupils are introduced to school life very well.
- The school provides very good support and guidance for the pupils.

### **Commentary**

27. The school provides a very happy environment that is conducive to learning. Very close attention is paid to health and safety issues. Pupils' healthy and safe living is promoted well through the Healthy Schools Initiative and through personal, social and health education lessons. Child protection procedures are very good and there is good liaison with other agencies. Designated members of staff are fully up to date in aspects of first aid and risk assessments are undertaken regularly.
28. Assessment procedures for tracking and improving pupils' academic progress are very well developed. There is also a very good and effective formal procedure for tracking and supporting the pupils' personal development and pupils are very aware of their personal targets. They are involved in regular self-assessment. Informal procedures are also very good. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families very well and this contributes much to pupils' personal guidance and development. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. The pupils really enjoy school and they say that the staff are 'very kind and very understanding'. Parents who responded to the questionnaire and who attended the parents' meeting before the inspection said that their children love coming to school.
29. All pupils are highly valued and their views are sought on a regular, formal basis through the school council. This council is influential on school life and has recently been involved, for example, in discussing how to spend money raised on a 'non-

uniform' day and they have drawn up the 'Four Cs' school mission statement. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were very confident that their ideas are sought and acted on when appropriate.

30. Very good induction arrangements, including very good liaison with the on site playgroup, ensure that the pupils settle happily into school. Pupils who join the school at times other than the beginning of the school year are also introduced into school life very well.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are all very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate what it provides for their children.
- Parents are well informed about their children's standards and progress and about how they can help them at home.
- The headteacher and governors provide parents with very good information about the school and about the future of education in Felsted.
- The school seeks, values and acts on the views of parents and there are very good procedures to deal with any concerns or complaints.
- There are very good links with the community and other schools and colleges.

### **Commentary**

31. Parents are very satisfied with the school. They feel it is very well led by the headteacher and are very comfortable about approaching it with any concerns. They say their children are encouraged to be mature and are enthusiastic and keen to attend. They appreciate the very good range of extra-curricular activities. Parents also value the school's very caring attitudes and say that the staff expect their children to work hard and achieve their best. The inspection team agrees with all these views.
32. Parents are provided with very good information about the school through, for example, the prospectus and they particularly appreciate the 'Friday Flyer'. The school publications now contain accurate information about attendance levels. Information is given out each term on the areas of the curriculum and topics to be studied by their children and the school sets up programmes and sessions to help parents to support their children's learning at home. Parents receive very good information about their children's progress through consultation evenings and termly and annual reports. They are also kept well informed about the future of education in Felsted through meetings and correspondence. Pupils and parents also receive very good support and guidance regarding the eleven plus examination.
33. The views of parents are actively sought by the headteacher through regular questionnaires. These views are acted upon when appropriate. For example, parents have been involved in instigating playground improvements for the younger pupils and the publication of the 'Friday Flyer'. Parents are always willing to come into school for specific purposes such as helping with cooking, swimming, cycling proficiency and hearing the pupils read. They are also keen to help on educational visits. The Felsted Primary School Parent Teachers Association is a group of very enthusiastic people

who help to organise social and fundraising events to support the school. They have recently bought four laptop computers and contributed towards new playground equipment. All these aspects contribute to pupils' learning and help to raise achievement.

34. Very good links with other schools and the community are used to pupils' benefit. The very good links with the community include links with the Church, Colchester United Football Club, The British Legion, the local Friendship Club, the production of a community newsletter and pupils contributing to a local charity to send money to India. The Community uses the school's swimming pool. The wider community is also used as an educational resource. For example, the many visitors to school include artists, African drummers and Indian dancers and pupils visit places of interest such as Colchester Castle and Duxford museum. Pupils take part in local football and netball matches and Year 6 pupils enjoy a residential visit. The school takes in students from a local university for their initial teacher training and the headteacher is supporting the development of other headteachers in the area. Pupils from a local secondary school come in for work experience. These links with local schools are very productive and support pupils' learning as the school gains access to additional activities for pupils and training for staff. The good links with local secondary schools ensure that pupils are prepared and are able to move confidently to the next stage in their education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. Leadership by other key staff and the governance of the school are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership that is improving the quality of education.
- There is a strong ethos for the valuing of all individuals.
- Self-evaluation procedures are accurate and very good.
- Leadership is devolved very well throughout the school community.
- The governors give very good support through their active involvement, interest and enthusiasm.
- The continued expansion of the school is a barrier to school improvement.

### **Commentary**

35. The leadership and management of the school show very good improvement since the previous inspection and staff and governors have worked successfully together to sustain the high quality of the school during a period of continued expansion, building and refurbishment. The headteacher, staff and governing body have all managed this process of change very well. The headteacher has retained the clear vision and determination for pupils' achievement identified in the last inspection, and is highly committed to the school and its community. She has successfully promoted and maintained a very strong ethos for valuing the worth of every individual and, as a result, there is very good morale and the pupils are doing very well. All school developments are introduced after thorough preparation and research and the headteacher is continually successful in leading the school to meet its targets. She

uses her daily contact with staff, parents and pupils very well so that she is fully aware of their views and opinions, and takes full regard of these in formulating school policies and procedures. She is sensitive to staff's personal and professional needs and ensures they are well trained and confident to take on their responsibilities. The headteacher is always enthusiastic and positive about innovations and encourages staff to share their ideas and commitment to the school's development. As a result, there is very good teamwork, especially between teachers and their assistants, and the school community is working together very well to ensure the sustained quality of provision.

36. The school's procedures for self-evaluation are very good and, as a result, staff and governors are confident about what the school does well and have a clear knowledge of what they are working on to improve. This practice begins with the pupils. They are encouraged to reflect upon the quality of their work and be realistic and confident about their strengths, as well as knowing what they should do next to improve and learn more. Teachers and assistants evaluate their work daily and seek to keep in place procedures and practices that work well, whilst improving aspects that could have been better. Senior managers reflect on the quality of provision and use this information to determine the school's priorities for what should be developed next. In addition, senior managers make accurate judgements about how effective the school is, and these judgements match those of inspectors very well.
37. Key staff work very well in their leadership and management roles because they are well trained, well informed and have the headteacher's support. Roles and responsibilities are delegated to adults very well, and every adult is involved in leading their own development and seeking to improve the quality of their work for the pupils. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and plays a full part in the development of the school. The duties and roles of all staff are well defined and there is a high level of teamwork that results in improved provision for the pupils and the smooth running of the school. There is very good leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the highly skilled co-ordinator meets all statutory requirements and ensures that all the pupils receive the best support they can.
38. The governing body is very well informed and involved in the work of the school. They routinely undertake training to keep abreast of local and national initiatives and make sure they research an issue thoroughly before making a decision. Appropriate committees are in place and the governing body fulfils all its statutory duties. The range of expertise of governors is wide and there is regular contact with the local community and parents, who have every confidence in the way the school is managed. Strategic planning is very good and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and share its ambitions. Long term planning, however, faces a barrier as there is continual uncertainty about the number of pupils who may join the school during the year, and whether there will be sufficient teachers and classrooms to meet their needs. Governors are very flexible about their future plans and remain very focussed on improving educational provision but do have to make some difficult decisions about finance. For example, investment in ICT equipment is needed if standards are to rise for the pupils. However, this large item of expenditure has had to be shelved due to the higher priority of providing classrooms. Appropriate plans are in hand to address this item this year, as the current round of new building is nearing completion. Meanwhile, the school is carrying forward a greater amount than is usually expected. However, this has appropriately been earmarked for equipping the new classrooms and completing the building work so that it is operational as quickly as possible.

**Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	711,922
Total expenditure	707,242
Expenditure per pupil	2,934

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	61,541
Balance carried forward to the next	66,221

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

39. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. Children enter school in the September of the school year in which they will be five, and are taught in two classes; the reception class; and a class containing a mix of reception and Year 1 pupils. Leadership and management are very effective and, as a result, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The accommodation and resources are good and are likely to be greatly enhanced when the current building work is completed. Children enjoy a warm, caring environment where relationships with staff are very good. The team of adults is highly trained and effective and they provide stimulating learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom. There is a very good ratio of staff to children and there are frequent opportunities for adults and children to work closely together throughout the day. As a result, all children in both classes, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, are very well supported. There is very good liaison with all pre-school providers and children benefit from a very comprehensive induction package that establishes positive relationships with parents. This high quality communication, both written and oral, continues throughout the year so that parents know what their children are learning, how well they are doing, and how they, as parents, can support learning in the home. Children enter reception with attainment that is broadly average in most of the areas of learning, except in phonics and numeracy where a large proportion of children's skills are well below average. They show very good achievement; standards are rising and are likely, for the majority of pupils entering Year 1 in 2005, to be well above average in most of the areas of learning.
40. **Knowledge and understanding of the world** was sampled. Children use computers appropriately and study a variety of themes such as houses and homes, minibeasts and the natural world. Evidence from files revealed that the children have studied healthy foods and have undertaken walks in the locality, visiting a farm. They have also used magnifying glasses and digital microscopes to look in detail at the objects collected. The other areas of learning are reported on below.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Routines are well established in both reception classes.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour.
- Children learn to co-operate with each other very well.

#### **Commentary**

41. Children achieve very well in response to the very good quality of teaching and learning provided. At the beginning of the day, children enter the classroom to music and greet each other and the staff courteously in a foreign language. In this way a happy and purposeful atmosphere is established. Similar well-established routines

continue throughout the day, for example: orderly movement about the building; taking turns when playing games; raising hands to answer during full class sessions; and putting things away after use. Children conform to all of these routines and also abide by the classroom rules, which ensure safety and consideration, with the minimum of fuss.

42. Children's behaviour and attitudes both to work and to people are very good. This is because staff provide excellent role models and show respect and courtesy to all while setting high expectations of the children. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively and positive behaviour is rewarded. Staff work successfully to create classroom cohesion and to raise individual self-esteem. Interesting activities are set up, which rely on children's interaction. By questioning, commentary and demonstration, teachers effectively ensure that children share their ideas, support each other and receive generous praise. As a result, most children are likely to enter Year 1 confidently expressing their opinion to the class and able to co-operate and relate to others.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers give a high priority to developing the children's speaking and phonic skills.
- Very good opportunities are provided for children to learn to read and write.

### **Commentary**

43. Teaching and learning are very good in this area of the curriculum and because of this, children achieve very well. Children's speaking and listening skills are developed very well throughout the day. Very good use is made of role-play, co-operative group work and class sessions to encourage the children to extend their vocabulary and staff are always willing to share ideas and communicate with the children. Staff provide good role models and use and pronounce 'Standard English' well. They are particularly skilled at asking children questions that make them think about the words they use. As a result, children are able to regularly practice reporting, predicting, empathising, explaining and supporting their statements with evidence. They can also communicate effectively and with confidence to individuals, groups and the full class.
44. When children enter reception their ability to link sounds and letters is well below average. Staff provide daily practice with phonics and structured reading tasks and this work is effectively extended at home. As a result, children make progress at a fast rate and are likely to enter Year 1 with average standards in reading. Adults make sure that the children are aware of their targets and know what they are working to improve. In addition, the children benefit from 'paired reading' with older pupils from Year 4. This generates a 'culture' of wanting to succeed in reading and leads the children successfully to enjoy books.
45. Adults provide many opportunities throughout the day for children to improve their writing skills. Every day, there are very effective adult led sessions on handwriting and spelling and, as a result, the children are keen to continue these activities in their play where they try very hard to use their writing skills. In addition, staff help the children to



make sentences and to write new vocabulary. As a result of these opportunities, most children are likely to reach the Early Learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers make sure that lessons are well structured and are very effectively matched to children's learning needs.
- Outdoor play is used well to develop mathematical concepts.

## Commentary

46. On entry to the reception class, two thirds of the children show average standards, with the other third being well below average in their development. Inspection shows that most of the children are likely to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1, and the children who entered with low attainment have almost caught up with the others. This very good achievement is a direct result of the very good teaching and learning provided.
47. Throughout the day, staff set up interesting activities for children to count, sort, sequence, compare and label apparatus so that basic concepts and vocabulary are consolidated. Accurate assessment of what children can do is used very well so that teachers ensure a very good match of activities to abilities so that all children show good achievement in their lessons. Adults also ask the children challenging questions that extend their thinking and often leave them wanting to do more! A commercial mathematics computer programme is also used that provides further reinforcement and assessment and allows the children to progress at their own pace.
48. Children's concepts of shape, space and measure are enhanced by the outdoor area with its markings, inclines, defined areas and its three dimensional structures. Reception children have easy access to this resource and teachers plan activities well so that the children extend their concepts. In one very good lesson seen, the teacher organised games, using the yard markings very inventively so that children extended their number bonds and number recognition skills. These excited the children and motivated them to work out how well they had done and to try again to be even better.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and children achieve well.
- Children play outside energetically.
- Children are encouraged to think about how to improve their skills.

## Commentary

49. Children enter reception with above average skills, and most of them are likely to enter Year 1 with well above average physical skills. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to develop manipulative skills in piecing together construction kits, using paintbrushes, glue, pencils and other small tools such as scissors. Currently, the outside play area is being developed. Nevertheless all children still have good access to safe areas where they can run and jump, climb on large apparatus or use small vehicles. There are also gardening areas for digging and planting. During the inspection, some good robust and energetic play was seen as children jumped off fixed apparatus and rode their tricycles with increased co-ordination and confidence. A happy atmosphere always prevailed, with children negotiating their own problems well and adults vigilant to the needs of all the class.
50. Children also have physical education lessons in the hall with Year 1 pupils. In one very good lesson, the children were able to show how well they controlled their

movements on gymnastic equipment and to show the attention they gave to the beginning, middle and end of their sequences. The teacher encouraged this by asking the children to think about the originality and quality of their movements, to be self-critical and to determine how to improve them. She also supported and guided them with prompts, questions and modelling throughout the lesson. As a result, they worked hard and gave considerable effort to improving the quality of their sequences.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers provide a very good range of imaginative materials for the children to use.
- Children learn very well because they are encouraged to experiment.

### **Commentary**

51. Children experience a very good range of activities that includes model making, craftwork, mixing paint, printing and colouring. This area of learning is very well taught and children achieve very well. On entry to the reception class, most children are below average in their creative development. This year, almost every child is likely to enter Year 1 with average creative ability, and about a third of the children are likely to have skills that are above average. A key factor in this is the way adults discuss and work alongside pupils to draw out their ideas and to help them to learn the correct use of tools and technique. Emphasis is placed on detailed observation. Children use magnifiers automatically to achieve this and modify their work as a result of such observations. Role-play to draw out creativity has also been given special attention. Interesting role-play areas have been created and time has also been given to help adults to improve their interventions with the children so that they draw out the appropriate language, actions and attitudes of each 'character in a shop or restaurant'. The result of this is that children are very keen to extend their play and experiment with new ideas to see how they may develop.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because of the consistently good quality of teaching.
- Standards in reading are high in Year 2.
- Assessment procedures are very good and pupils' progress is tracked very well.
- There is very effective teamwork between teachers and assistants and pupils with special educational needs are supported very well.
- Writing is developed well through subjects other than English.
- The subject is very well led.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to extend pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**

52. In all year groups, the achievement of the pupils is good. Detailed analysis of the school's records shows that a significant number of pupils enter the school each year, and their attainment in English is usually lower than the pupils who have been at the school for some time. This leads to test results with lower average scores than in similar schools. However, the pupils currently in Year 6 who have been at the school since Year 1 are doing very well, and they show very good 'added value' in English over their time in school. Almost one fifth of the Year 6 pupils have joined the school within the last year and are working hard to catch up with the others in class. The school's data shows that the Year 6 2005 test results are likely to be above average, but lower than originally predicted, due to the lower attainment of these newer pupils. Standards in Year 2 are above average, and this represents good achievement for the pupils. In reading, the 2005 test results are likely to be well above average as a result of the way that teachers encourage pupils to enjoy books and to gain confidence in their reading skills.
53. There are several reasons why achievement is good, even for the pupils who enter at a later stage. The headteacher and the subject leader have been tracking pupils' progress with great care and routinely monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. In the lessons seen, a key strength was the way that teachers shared the learning intention at the start of each lesson, and consequently, the pupils knew what they were expected to learn. Another strength in teaching is the way the teachers use questions, discussion and talk. Pupils learn to speak confidently and readily volunteer to answer questions and to read aloud in class. Consequently, standards in these activities are above average in both Years 2 and 6, and have improved since the last inspection. Teachers also put a strong focus on reading and encourage pupils to enjoy books and this enjoyment results in high standards in reading throughout the school, but especially in Year 2. There is a good range of books in every class to develop pupils' interests in reading but the current lack of a school library limits the opportunity for pupils to carry out independent research. Although ICT is used well by teachers, especially those with interactive boards, there is little use of ICT by the pupils.
54. As standards in writing have been lower than reading, the school has taken steps to improve it by providing time for writing in other subjects. This strategy is beginning to work. Pupils are now benefiting from regular opportunities for writing as an enrichment activity on Fridays. They are encouraged to write both fiction and non-fiction, which is also linked to their work in other subjects such as geography, history or religious education. As a result, standards in writing are improving and all groups of pupils are achieving well because tasks are well matched to their needs. Pupils' books in Year 6 show that they write at length, sustaining ideas, and using correct grammar and punctuation.
55. The school's assessment is accurate and the data on every pupil's progress is kept and analysed very well. Teachers use this information very well to plan what pupils should learn next and books are usually marked very well so that the pupils are clear about how well they have done, and what could be improved. In addition, assessment is carried out by the pupils themselves and they are fully involved in setting the next targets for their learning. As a result, the pupils are clearly motivated to learn more and are confident in what they can already do well. If any pupils experience difficulty with learning, teachers and assistants work very well together to provide direct support in class that helps these pupils keep up with the others. Those pupils with special educational needs receive very good support that is planned, organised and often

delivered by the special educational needs co-ordinator. The result of this very good teamwork is that these pupils are fully included in class and achieve well.

56. Subject leadership and management are very effective with a strong vision and commitment to improvement. The subject leader has identified relevant priorities for the subject and has been successful in achieving them. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good as standards have improved in speaking and listening and reading, and the achievement for those pupils who have been at the school since Year 1 is largely very good. The quality of teaching and learning has also been maintained as consistently good or better in the face of continued expansion and growth of the school.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

57. Literacy is addressed well in subjects other than English and, consequently, pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are developed effectively in a wide range of lessons. Teachers encourage the pupils to use the appropriate vocabulary for subjects such as science and technology and there are good examples of extended writing in subjects such as history and religious education.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of pupils in all classes is good.
- There are very good procedures for assessment.
- There is a very good emphasis on solving mathematical problems.
- More emphasis could be given to learning mathematics through other subjects.

### **Commentary**

58. Throughout the school, standards in mathematics are above the national average. However, this is not always reflected in the data from test results. Each year, a significant number of pupils join the school and their ability in mathematics is generally below that of the pupils who have been at the school for some time. This leads to the 2004 average point scores for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 being lower than in schools that have a much more stable population. When the test results for individual pupils are compared against their attainment in previous years, almost all the pupils are achieving more than is usually expected. In addition, the work of most of the pupils in their books and in their lessons is generally above the level expected for their age, and pupils of all abilities are being challenged to learn as much as they can. Further analysis of the school's data shows that most of the pupils in Year 6 who have been at the school since Year 1 are achieving very well and have gained much more than usually expected over their time in school.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is consistency among the staff and all teachers have good mathematical knowledge and skills. The procedures for assessment are very good. At the end of every lesson, pupils indicate with red, amber or green 'traffic lights' whether they have found the work hard or easy and usually write a comment about it. Teachers write replies to these comments when they mark the books and help pupils to understand how they can improve. The pupils' attainments are assessed very accurately and well, and teachers use this information to set targets for what each pupil should learn next as well as to determine the topics that should be taught to the class. As a result, pupils have very clear targets in their books and all know what they are working on to improve. This leads directly to pupils being motivated and wanting to learn more. Teachers also make the lessons interesting so that pupils are keen to do their work. For example, in a lesson in Year 4, the teacher had given each pair of pupils an aspect of measurement to consider. They discussed these together and were eager to report the different methods they had found to, for example, accurately measure the amount of shampoo left in a bottle. In another lesson for pupils in Year 6, the teacher held a 'prime number auction' so that each pupil chosen to 'bid' had to raise the 'price' to the next prime number. This resulted in all the class working very hard together to find the next prime number, and not wanting to stop the activity.
60. In all lessons, teachers encourage the pupils to talk about how they solve problems and to share their methods of working with each other. This develops the pupils' use of mathematical language very well so that, for example, when pupils in Year 6 discuss together how to use a 'broken calculator' they can articulate that they would calculate the brackets first and then divide, multiply, add and subtract in that order to ensure

accuracy of calculation. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and additional tuition that helps them to achieve very well against the targets set in their individual education plans.

61. The subject is led very well and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The subject leader evaluates the provision very well and identifies correctly what works well and what could be improved. Direct action is then taken that leads to improvement in the subject and a consistent quality of delivery throughout the school. The subject leader has correctly identified that insufficient use is made of computers in the subject, and that more could be done to help the pupils learn mathematics in other subjects.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

62. Pupils learn to use their mathematical skills appropriately in subjects such as science and design and technology. However, teachers are not yet planning routinely to teach mathematical concepts in other subjects when, for example, the pupils consider time lines in history.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The consistently good quality of teaching, learning, leadership and management is raising standards.
- Activities in lessons are absorbing and well matched to pupils' prior learning.
- There is a good focus on pupils writing clearly about their investigational work and experiments.
- Pupils' work is marked very well.
- The use of ICT is limited, both as a teaching resource and for pupils' own learning and recording.

### **Commentary**

63. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection, when standards were average. They are now above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. This good achievement is due to consistently good teaching and learning throughout the school with teachers bringing some very good features into most lessons. Good leadership and management strategies have also contributed to this improvement. Staff now have a good quality curriculum to support them which is not too prescriptive and which allows very capable teachers to be flexible and include their own ideas and enthusiasms. The subject leader effectively monitors curriculum plans, pupils' work and lessons so that she has a good overview of performance throughout the school. As a result, she has introduced initiatives such as a revision book for Year 6 pupils and a more detailed assessment system to track pupils' progress. Teachers' individual assessments and marking are detailed, accurate and analysed well to highlight strengths and weaknesses in learning. This information is then used well to plan activities in lessons and to provide written comments in pupils' books that further extend pupils' understanding.

64. Investigation is emphasised well and there are good cross-curricular links so that scientific concepts are developed in other subjects, for example, in the use of mechanisms in design and technology and in an understanding of rivers from lessons on the water cycle. Teachers are good at checking pupils' understanding before they move them on to other work. They ensure that pupils are secure in using scientific vocabulary by effective repetition and question and answer sessions. The learning aims for each lesson are made clear to the pupils and teachers use a very good range of resources and absorbing activities to sustain concentration and consolidate understanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for this subject is uplifting and they inspire real enjoyment in their pupils. As a result of this, and the pupils' very good attitudes to work, all pupils, including those with higher-attainments and those with special educational needs, achieve well. Although pupils work on the same experiments, teachers effectively challenge all pupils by modifying questions, examples and recording methods to match the different levels of prior attainment. Also, some very competent and well-prepared teaching assistants effectively support pupils with special educational needs throughout their work.
65. The science curriculum is well balanced across the programmes of study and pupils have plenty of opportunities to carry out experiments. In Year 2, for example, pupils worked collaboratively testing their predictions about surface friction using a range of materials such as oil, sand and salt. Pupils are also encouraged to be independent. In Year 4, for example, pupils worked on individual investigations at home and presented these confidently to the class, demonstrating resources, predictions and findings. The teacher utilised these opportunities very well. She raised the self-esteem of individuals by praise and questioning and further enhanced their learning by discussing the possibilities of further study using variables such as time. The recording of investigative work varies in each class. In some, there is little or no evidence of ICT and variety of presentation is limited. Nevertheless evaluative and explanatory comments by pupils, particularly at Year 6, are precise, clear and couched in the appropriate scientific language. Where interactive boards are in use they are used well but a lack of classroom access to the Internet was observed to be limiting learning in one lesson.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

66. Too few lessons were available for inspectors to see during the time of the inspection. However, pupils' work shows that while standards in Year 2 are average, and pupils achieve satisfactorily, the standards of pupils in Year 6 are below average and some pupils are underachieving. This confirms the school's own evaluation that the subject should be a priority for improvement. Currently, the subject leader and staff are doing the best they can with the limited resources available. They make sure, for example, that pupils cover all the aspects of the curriculum and that, through computer clubs, pupils with the potential for higher attainment are able to achieve satisfactorily. Staff have been trained successfully and have appropriate and relevant computer skills. However, there are too few computers, a lack of software and the computer suite is too small and too far away from most classes. Also, computers are under-used to support learning in other subjects. As a result, although pupils study all the topics they should, they do not have enough day-to-day practice to improve their skills. Governors and senior managers are very aware of this situation, but the continual expansion of the school means they are forced, over time, to make difficult decisions about whether, for example, to provide extra classrooms and teachers, or whether to invest in ICT. This barrier to improvement has directly affected the pupils' use of ICT and the subject has not kept pace with the developments evident in other schools.



## HUMANITIES

*The provision for history and geography was sampled. Inspectors were unable to see sufficient lessons in religious education as most of these took place after the inspection period.*

67. In **history and geography**, sampling of pupils' work and teachers' plans indicates that both subjects are planned and taught appropriately over the year. There are good links between history, geography and literacy as much of the reading and writing in the subjects is linked to non-fiction work in English. Art is also used well for pupils to illustrate their findings in the subjects. A suitable range of visits and visitors is also included in the curriculum to enhance learning.
68. In **religious education**, teachers' plans and pupils' work show that good improvement has taken place since the last inspection. The key reason for this is the effective contribution of the subject leader who ensures that the subject is planned and taught, in line with the locally agreed syllabus. This includes opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship and listen to visitors from different religions. Religious education is taught through other subjects, discussion, assemblies and circle times, and is effectively linked to subjects such as English, art and PSHE. Much of the pupils' work is reflective with links to their own feelings and experiences. For example, this was evident in the work of Year 6 pupils who have studied the ten 'modern' commandments and interpreted the story of David and Goliath set in modern times as an incident between two well-known football teams. The quality of teaching and learning was good in the two lessons seen in Years 2 and 3, where the pupils showed interest and enjoyment in learning about the features of the church and in talking about their memories of special objects.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

*Art and design was not inspected. The provision for design and technology, music and physical education was sampled.*

69. In **design and technology**, one lesson was observed. Pupils experience a suitable curriculum and their models displayed around school are usually made and 'finished off' well. In the one Year 6 lesson observed, teaching and learning were very good and the pupils were motivated by having the opportunity to handle model cars to observe chassis and various wheel mechanisms before they made their own designs.
70. In **music**, two lessons were seen and the pupils in Years 2 and 6 demonstrated average standards in listening and appraising. The school 'orchestra' accompanied the singing in assembly well, and there are appropriate opportunities for all pupils to learn to play a musical instrument.
71. In **physical education**, no lessons were observed. The curriculum meets all national curriculum requirements and there is a good variety of extra-curricular provision including residential outdoor pursuits opportunities, inter school competitions and weekly clubs such as hockey and basketball. In addition, Colchester United football club staff practise individual ball skills with the older pupils.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*This area of the curriculum was sampled.*

72. The school places much emphasis on developing pupils' personal, social and moral skills through its very good ethos and it has ensured appropriate attention is given to health issues through working towards the Healthy Schools Award. The overall programme meets statutory requirements. It is clearly planned around a published scheme and includes attention to issues such as health, diet, sex and relationships education, drugs and personal safety. Weekly lessons take place but elements of the planned curriculum are also inter-woven with other subjects. In the two personal, social and health education lessons seen Year 3 pupils discussed what is needed to realise your dreams using such vocabulary as 'determination', 'practise' and 'concentration' and Year 6 pupils developed their knowledge of healthy eating by discussing what constitutes a healthy packed lunch.
73. All staff work to promote excellent relationships which in turn lead to a willingness on the part of pupils to take on personal responsibility and they are provided with many opportunities around the school. The influential school council makes an important contribution to pupils' citizenship and their sense of responsibility to each other in a community.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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