

INSPECTION REPORT

HAMILTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114706

Headteacher: Mr C Reynolds

Lead inspector: Ian Knight

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 2nd March 2005

Inspection number: 266949

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 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 420

School address: Constantine Road
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Essex
Postcode: CO3 3GB

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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs S Waite
governors:

Date of previous 18th January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hamilton Primary School is a large primary school serving the central area of Colchester. It was awarded the Schools Achievement Award in 2003 and renewed its 'Investors in People' status in 2004. Most of its pupils are from backgrounds with positive socio-economic indicators. The majority of pupils are white European; there are small numbers from Indian, other Asian, black African and black Caribbean backgrounds, or of mixed heritage. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs is lower than average; none has a statement of special educational need. No pupils who speak English as an additional language are at the early stages of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school other than at the usual times is in the average range. Although the full range of attainment is represented when the children enter Reception, attainment overall on entry is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2303 1	Ian Knight	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
1311	Barry Wood	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
3054 4	Gill Battarbee	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science, art and design, physical education.
3270 2	Anna Savva	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs, English, geography, history.
1276 4	Wendy Thomas	<i>Team inspector</i>	The Foundation Stage, information and communication technology, music.
1728 8	Megan Warner	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics, design and technology, religious education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

THIS IS A GOOD SCHOOL. ALL PUPILS ACHIEVE WELL BECAUSE OF GOOD TEACHING BASED ON A GOOD CURRICULUM. THE HEADTEACHER PROVIDES GOOD LEADERSHIP FOR THE SCHOOL, SUPPORTED WELL BY COLLEAGUES. MANAGEMENT IS SATISFACTORY. SPENDING PER PUPIL IS LOW. THE SCHOOL PROVIDES GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good leadership from the headteacher and senior managers is producing positive change in the school.
- Pupils achieve well because they work very hard in lessons.
- Pupils really enjoy coming to school; they have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well.
- Achievement in mathematics is very good because of the very good teaching and brisk pace to learning.
- Pupils are not given enough responsibility within the school or for their own learning.
- Good teaching contributes to pupils' great enjoyment of lessons.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education through the very good links with partner secondary schools.
- The school has not informed parents well enough about the improvements taking place.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much improved and science standards are higher. Achievement, teaching and the leadership of the school are better than before.

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	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	A	A	A

Key: A* – very high; 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 in the school is good. A grade of A* in the table above indicates that the school's performance was in the top five per cent nationally. Children in Reception are on track to exceed the Early Learning Goals in all areas except creative development, which they are nevertheless on track to attain. This represents good achievement for these children. Standards in Year 2 are above expectations in mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, and design and technology, and well above expectations in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Standards in religious education and physical education are in line with expectations. This represents good achievement. The other subjects were not a focus of the inspection, and secure judgements on standards are not possible. In Year 6, standards are well above expectations in English, mathematics and science, and above

expectations in ICT, art and design, and design and technology. Standards in religious education and physical education are again in line with expectations, and no secure judgements are possible in the case of the other subjects. This again represents good achievement overall, and very good achievement in mathematics.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are progressing well. Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very good overall. However, some pupils have found staff changes in the infants unsettling, and infant pupils' behaviour is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good education. Teaching throughout the school is good. Notable in classrooms is the quality of relationships: pupils and staff care about each other and pupils want to do well. Consequently, they work hard and make good progress in their understanding. Although pupils work in a variety of groupings, they have few opportunities to work truly independently or collaboratively. Long-term assessment is used well to track pupils' progress, but the quality and use of marking and shorter-term assessments are inconsistent.

The school provides a good curriculum which is enriched by other activities and by visitors to school, visits to places of educational interest, and the very good links with partner secondary schools. Classrooms are cramped and the lack of a field makes provision for physical education problematic, affecting standards slightly. The school provides satisfactorily for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and gives them sound support, advice and guidance. It involves pupils satisfactorily in its work by seeking and acting on their views. The school maintains good links with the community and sound links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the school is led and managed well. The headteacher, senior managers and curriculum co-ordinators provide good leadership of the school. Management and governance are satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied with the school. They believe pupils behave well and that the school has high expectations, but they have some concerns in respect of the information they receive and how well regarded their views are. The inspection team agreed with their positive views, but found the information provided about pupils' progress to be good and links with parents satisfactory. Pupils think the school is good and are particularly pleased with the teaching.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school and for their own learning.
- Improve the quality of information for parents about the school, so that they have a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement throughout the school is good, and very good in mathematics in the juniors.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Achievement throughout the school is good.
- Achievement in mathematics in the junior department is very good.
- Pupils with SEN, those who are gifted and talented, and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
- Although standards in science are above expectations, there is not enough emphasis on investigative work.
- Achievement in religious education is satisfactory; most pupils do not record enough work to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

1. STANDARDS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS IN 2004 FOR PUPILS IN YEAR 2 WERE WELL ABOVE AVERAGE IN READING, AND ABOVE AVERAGE IN WRITING AND MATHEMATICS. IN COMPARISON WITH THOSE OF SIMILAR SCHOOLS, READING STANDARDS WERE AVERAGE AND STANDARDS IN WRITING AND MATHEMATICS WERE BELOW AVERAGE. STANDARDS HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT HIGHER, BUT THE SCHOOL EXPLAINS THAT THE APPARENT DECLINE CAME ABOUT BECAUSE OF TWO FACTORS. FIRSTLY, IN THE PAST, PUPILS HAD SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME PRACTISING TEST PAPERS. THE SCHOOL CONSULTED PARENTS IN APRIL, AND PARENTS FELT THAT THIS PLACED TOO GREAT A BURDEN ON THEIR CHILDREN, SO THE SCHOOL STOPPED THE PRACTICE. SECONDLY, THE SCHOOL TOOK PART IN A PILOT SCHEME IN WHICH PUPILS WERE ASSESSED IN SCHOOL, SUBJECT TO CHECKING FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY. EARLY INDICATIONS ARE THAT PUPILS IN SUCH SCHOOLS DID NOT ACHIEVE AS MANY HIGHER LEVELS AS ELSEWHERE, AND IT IS CERTAINLY THE CASE THAT, IN WRITING ESPECIALLY, THE NUMBER OF HIGHER LEVELS IN THIS SCHOOL WAS LOWER THAN PREVIOUSLY. TEACHERS' ASSESSMENTS IN SCIENCE SHOW STANDARDS TO BE ABOUT AVERAGE COMPARED TO THOSE OF ALL SCHOOLS AND OF SIMILAR SCHOOLS.

2. In the table, the expected Level 2 is represented by 15 points and the higher Level 3 by 21 points. One 'point' represents approximately the progress expected in a term.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.0 (19.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.3 (17.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.0 (18.9)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2004, standards were well above average in English, mathematics and science. This is also true when the school is compared only to those whose pupils performed similarly four years ago in Year 2. There has been a positive trend to results over the last few years. Pupils' progress over Years 3 to 6 has been above the national average.

4. In the table, the expected Level 4 is represented by 27 points, and the higher Level 5 by 33 points.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (28.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.1 (29.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.1 (31.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. However, test results do not tell the whole story. They refer to tests last year in only a few subjects. In particular, they give no hints about pupils' *achievement*, that is whether they do as well as they ought. Inspection evidence can fill some of these gaps.

6. Children enter school in Reception with standards that are already above what would normally be expected for their age. They make good progress, and many had already achieved the goals for the end of Reception at the time of the inspection. The good teaching means that children are on track to exceed the goals expected in all areas except in creative development, which they are on course to meet. This results in good achievement in all areas except for creative development, in which achievement is satisfactory.

7. Further good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that this good progress continues. In Year 2, standards are above expectations in mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, and design and technology. Standards are well above expectations in reading, writing, and speaking and listening. Standards are as expected in religious education and physical education. The other subjects were not a focus of this inspection and there was insufficient evidence to form a view on their standards. Nevertheless, the good progress made and the levels of challenge seen in lessons show that these standards represent good achievement for these pupils.

8. Good progress continues in Years 3 to 6, resulting in standards that are well above expectations in English, mathematics and science, and above average in ICT, art and design, and design and technology. Physical education standards are in line with national expectations. Standards in Year 6 are as expected in religious education, although higher than expected in Year 5. In science, it is pupils' knowledge that is particularly good, as well as the teaching of science through practical activities. However, the use of investigative methods to apply learning to new situations is less well developed; pupils are not routinely encouraged to work independently or collaboratively. Other subjects were not a focus of the inspection and there was not enough evidence to form a view about standards in them. Achievement overall is good in the juniors, except in mathematics, where it is very good because of consistently very good teaching, and in religious education, where it is satisfactory. Religious education is relatively weaker because pupils do not, in most classes, record enough of their work so as to deepen their knowledge and help them to recall it. The exception to this is in Year 5, where work is recorded particularly well and standards are above expectations; these pupils achieve very well.

9. Good support, based closely on their individual education plans (IEPs), ensures that pupils with SEN make the same progress as their peers, and their achievement is similarly good. Pupils with a particular gift or talent are identified by the school, and this information is noted in planning so that they, too, make good progress and achieve well. There are few pupils who speak English as an additional language, and none at the early stages of acquiring fluency. Nevertheless, the school's assessments and tracking data show that they make the same good progress and achievement as other pupils in the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. Pupils' attendance at school is very good and their punctuality is satisfactory. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make a confident and happy start in the Reception classes and have very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour help them to take part enthusiastically in activities and work hard.
- Pupils build very good relationships with each other, and they work and play together with enjoyment and confidence.
- The school and parents work very well together in encouraging pupils' very good attendance and in reinforcing very good attitudes and behaviour.

Commentary

10. Children in the Reception class make a happy transfer from local nursery schools, and initially they have better skills and personal qualities than expected. They quickly show confidence and independence and build very good relationships. They listen to their teachers and want to communicate their knowledge to adults, for example of language and number. They respond well to good teaching and have very good attitudes and behaviour. They make very good progress towards the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development.

11. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are happy to come to school. They are smart in their school uniforms and represent their parents' attitudes well. Pupils have consistently very good attitudes. They persevere, and want to do their best and work hard. Lessons in all classes are enjoyable experiences for both teachers and pupils, and learning is conducted at pace and with purpose. Junior pupils behave very well and they have a strong understanding of self-discipline and the behaviour boundaries. They realise that hard work will bring them success, and they look forward to classroom challenges and talking about their ideas. The behaviour of infant pupils is good. While they are becoming used to a new teacher they can occasionally become excitable or lose concentration, but behaviour is never poor. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or where English is not their mother tongue, are well integrated into all classrooms and have no effect on the learning of the others.

12. Around the school, pupils' behaviour is very good and they are polite to adults. Their capacity for building very good relationships is apparent, and they feel relaxed and play harmoniously together without fear of bullying or harassment. Some parents are anxious about bullying, but the very occasional verbal differences between pupils are soon reconciled and do not have any lingering effect. Pupils value each other's differences and contributions, both in the classroom and in clubs and activities. The school has not needed to exclude any pupils in the last two years.

13. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained attendance levels at very high levels in relation to the national average. Attendance procedures are thorough, and parents want to comply; unauthorised absence is minimal and holidays taken during the school term are few. Most pupils arrive at school on time and all are eager to make a prompt start to the school day. The school receives good support from the education welfare service.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.0
National data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0
National data	0.2

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

14. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It is promoted well through subjects such as religious education, poetry, science and dance. Pupils show considerable respect for peoples' feelings, values and beliefs. Visitors promote respect and understanding of different values and beliefs well. They include a Hindu priest and priests and ministers from various Christian churches, and the pupils make visits to local Christian churches and a local synagogue. Assemblies are satisfactory, but opportunities are missed to develop pupils' spiritual development, for example through choral music. However, there are excellent opportunities for instrumentalists to perform to an audience, which contributes well to the spiritual development of all. Pupils are respectful, and participate fully in opportunities for prayer. Assemblies promote pupils' moral development very well, as do the Golden Rules, which are discussed and displayed around the school. Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong. Social behaviour, for example how to behave when a guide dog for the blind is working, is also promoted very well in assemblies.

15. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, pupils consider the difference between 'wants' and 'needs'. Their social development is very well promoted, resulting in very good relationships and a good understanding of their wider social responsibilities, such as through the collections they make for local charities. However, social responsibilities within the day-to-day running of the school are less well developed. The achievement of the Early Learning Goal for personal, social and emotional development in the Reception class is very good, and this continues throughout the school. For example, pupils are encouraged to work with partners in most lessons, which they do very successfully. Good social relationships are also promoted very well through visits and school journeys. For instance, at the start of the year a residential visit was organised for Year 6 which helped to bond the pupils and enabled the new teachers to get to know them quickly. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in promoting pupils' cultural development. There have been many visits from people of different cultural backgrounds, and music of different cultures played in assemblies. Geography develops an understanding of different cultures very well, and history and literacy lessons promote the culture of the majority of pupils very successfully. Provision in this area is now good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, based on a good curriculum. The school provides soundly for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety, and gives pupils satisfactory support, advice and guidance. It involves pupils satisfactorily through seeking and acting on their views. The school maintains very good links with other schools, good links with the community, and satisfactory links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and very good in mathematics in the juniors. Good assessment procedures are used well in Years 1 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive relationships in classrooms ensure that pupils work hard and learn well.
- Learning support assistants make a positive contribution to learning, especially in the infant department.
- The teaching of mathematics is consistently very good.

- Pupils have few opportunities to work independently.
- Planning is good, and very good in the juniors, but the organisation of free choice activities in Reception is not rigorous enough.
- Although long-term tracking data is used well in the school, the use of individual targets to ensure that pupils have a clear idea of their own learning is less well developed.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (6%)	10 (28%)	16 (44%)	8 (22%)	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.

16. In almost all lessons, it is immediately striking that pupils and teachers enjoy being in one another's company and respect each other. Pupils really want to behave well, learn and work hard. This is because of teachers' high expectations, both of what pupils will learn and of how they will behave. Pupils readily respond to these expectations, showing very good levels of application and productivity, even when teachers are working with other groups in the class. Well-understood routines in classes make sure that pupils understand when it is appropriate to ask a teacher or other adult for help. This ensures that learning is good for all. In addition, the calm atmosphere in lessons means that teachers can concentrate on teaching, rather than spend time managing behaviour.

17. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially for pupils with SEN. In a Year 3 geography lesson, for example, the learning support assistant supported pupils effectively, helping them to use the computer confidently to research different localities within India and to make comparisons. In an excellent Year 6 lesson, the learning support assistant was very effective in motivating pupils and ensuring they had specific guidance. At the same time, they were given the opportunity to think for themselves by asking a range of questions that promoted very good thinking and speaking and listening skills.

18. Pupils achieve very well in mathematics, and this is because of the very good teaching they receive. The teaching in all lessons observed was at least good and it was very good in over three-quarters, one lesson being excellent. This consistently very good teaching drives pupils' understanding, challenging them well beyond their comfort zone. In the excellent lesson, the teacher engendered real enthusiasm in pupils as they tackled problems involving patterns in number sequences. The teacher made particularly good use of the computer-linked whiteboard, with high quality presentation. The use of prepared 'slides', for example key vocabulary and prepared puzzles, gave pace to the lesson. Pupils were keen to puzzle out the answers, helped by timely hints from the teacher. Assessment in this lesson was used particularly well to ensure that every group had work at precisely the right level, so they worked hard and made especially good progress.

19. However, in many lessons, pupils are passive learners. They have few opportunities to really investigate and research for themselves. The cramped nature of some rooms certainly restricts the range of strategies that can be employed in teaching, but nevertheless more such opportunities could be provided. This was most notable in the teaching of science. A key issue of the previous inspection required the school to give pupils more opportunities to design their own experiments. Whilst the teaching of science does now include more practical activities, the school is aware of the need to involve pupils more in

the planning and execution of investigative tasks; at present the level of such involvement is restricting the achievement of some pupils, especially the most able.

20. Planning in Years 1 and 2 is good, and it is very good in Years 3 to 6. Planning clearly sets out what is to be learned in the lesson, and the activities that will support that learning. In Reception, the planning of direct teaching is also effective, but it does not address the organisation of free choice activities rigorously enough. As a result, it is not always clear how these activities will support learning, as they do not have rigorous learning objectives attached to them to guide adults. Pupils have a genuinely free choice of a variety of activities, and they tend to choose them on the basis of gender, with girls doing more sedentary activities, whilst boys go outside and use sand and wheeled toys. The school does not monitor which pupils undertake which activities closely enough to ensure that all pupils take part in a wide enough range.

21. The school has a good assessment policy, and long-term tracking data is closely analysed to identify areas of teaching that might be weak and to address them. However, marking is inconsistent across classes, with some giving clear guidance to pupils about future work but some having very limited value. The school sets targets for groups of pupils, but it does not negotiate individual targets for learning, so pupils' understanding of their own learning is satisfactory rather than good. Nevertheless, teachers' knowledge of their classes is good, and this enables them to set challenging work in the majority of lessons.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum, which is enhanced well by other activities. There is a satisfactory number of teachers, and there are very good levels of support staff. Resourcing is satisfactory, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory for the effective teaching of all of the National Curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced.
- Opportunities for enrichment are good.
- The accommodation is cramped and limits learning opportunities in some subjects.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education.

Commentary

22. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all its pupils. Programmes for sex and relationships education and drugs awareness are in place. These are supported by the school nurse. There is an effective programme for PSHE. Teachers plan well to develop links across the curriculum which make learning coherent for the pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by regular 'theme weeks'. The most recent of these have been a multicultural week, a creative arts week and a science week. There is a wide range of visits to places of interest to support learning. Pupils in Year 6 undertake a residential visit. The school also invites visitors to speak in assemblies or to work with classes; during the inspection week the younger pupils had a visitor from a guide dog and its owner. The school has strong links with local churches.

23. There are very effective links with local secondary schools. These are particularly strong in science, mathematics, ICT and design and technology. Teachers from Year 6 and

Year 7 work together to plan sequences of lessons, some of which take place at the secondary school. This extends the learning opportunities and prepares pupils well for the transfer to secondary school.

24. The school has responded well to parents' desire for a wider range of extra-curricular activities. There is a good range of after-school clubs and these are well attended. The school is seeking ways of developing this provision further.

25. Whilst resources for learning are satisfactory, there are aspects of the accommodation that are unsatisfactory and which limit learning opportunities. There are two halls but they are small. This has an effect on the learning opportunities in physical education lessons, and also it is not possible for the whole school to meet together. Some of the classrooms and the ICT suite are very cramped, and this has an impact on learning in practical subjects such as art and design, and design and technology. The small size of some rooms affects the range of teaching strategies that can be used and limits the amount of independence pupils can exhibit in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school's care, welfare and health and safety procedures are satisfactory. The school provides pupils with sound support and advice. Pupils are adequately involved in the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school satisfactorily maintains the support, guidance and welfare of pupils, but gives too little priority to the development of systematic procedures.
- The school receives good support from outside professional agencies in looking after pupils.
- The headteacher and staff implement effective child protection procedures.
- The headteacher, staff and pupils have confidence and trust in each other.
- Pupils are quickly made to feel part of the school family.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas to the running of the school and to take responsibility.

Commentary

26. The new headteacher assessed that the areas associated with care were already satisfactory and not an immediate priority for development. Presently, most aspects of this area are in line with the satisfactory judgement of the last inspection, but the care of pupils is not making a major positive contribution to their well-being. There is a good range of satisfactory policies and procedures, but some appear outdated and lack a systematic review by governors. Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of procedures through in-service training, and they are well supported by outside professional agencies. The school nursing service has a positive relationship with the school and assists with sex and health education, which has the total support of parents.

27. Child protection procedures conform to Essex statutory guidelines, and the school is vigilant to the potential risks to children. There is a responsible governor, and staff training has recently been updated. Health and safety procedures are broadly satisfactory but lack real focus by the school and the input of a responsible governor. The school carries out audits of the school premises, but they would benefit from more rigorous appraisal of the storage of resources. Risk assessments are in place for outside visits. The school is a safe place, but there is a very high rate of minor accidents because of the inadequate school playground space. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of any hazards before activities and are responsible when releasing children to parents and carers at the end of the school day. Accident procedures and the dispensing of medicines are not supported well by the inadequate facilities.

28. Most teachers and staff have a good knowledge of their pupils. The arrangements for assessing children's attainment and progress against the Early Learning Goals are satisfactory in the Reception classes. The assessment of attainment and progress in academic subjects is satisfactory. The tracking of pupils' personal development throughout the school is good and is supported by pupils' personal profiles that are passed between teachers. This practice, however, is reliant upon the individual teacher, and information is not centralised. Teachers identify pupils with SEN, and they develop good individual education plans with pupils and parents. The school's pastoral care is underpinned by good attendance and behaviour procedures, but its approach to pastoral care is more reactive, and is an underdeveloped feature of the school.

29. The induction of children in the Reception classes is good, and they make a smooth transition from local pre-schools. Parents feel welcome and knowledgeable about the routines and meet many staff who will help them in the future. Pupils joining later in the school year are warmly welcomed into the school family. Parents appreciate the school's

efforts in giving their children a successful start to their school lives, but would like greater access to the Reception class in the morning to settle their children.

30. The school's efforts to seek pupils' ideas and value them as partners in the school are developing slowly, and require greater promotion. The school has started a school council to harvest the ideas of pupils, but it meets too infrequently and has too low a profile to have a significant impact on wider school issues. Pupils have group targets, but personal targets are not well developed, so that pupils do not have enough responsibility for developing and improving their own learning. Pupils are willing to take responsibility around the school, but there are too few opportunities for them to really affect their environment or play a proactive part in school life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The majority of parents are satisfied with the school and the education it provides. The links between the school and home are good for most parents. The school's links with the community are good and its links with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents are satisfied and agree that many aspects of the school are improving.
- A minority of parents are dissatisfied with some aspect of school life, often based on incorrect perceptions.
- The headteacher and staff are trying hard to listen to all parents, but communications do not always allow parents to see clearly the school's improvements and values.
- The majority of parents help and support the school well and make a good contribution to their children's learning and involvement in school life.
- All pupils benefit greatly from the school's good relationships with the local community.
- The school has very good relationships with other schools, which support the delivery of some subjects of the National Curriculum.

Commentary

31. The new headteacher has given a high priority to the relationship with parents and his efforts at improving the school are increasingly recognised by them. Parents are markedly more satisfied with the school than at the time of the previous inspection and there are large increases for most aspects of school life. The school is presently oversubscribed as its reputation grows. The inspection team confirms the progress of the school and its effectiveness.

32. Presently, there is one area of significant parents' dissatisfaction with the school: too many do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Whilst parents receive a very good annual report on their children's progress, some have expectations on feedback on progress beyond the school's capabilities. A minority of parents says that the school does not work well with parents, that extra-curricular activities are insufficient and that homework is not effective. However, all three areas are judged to be at least satisfactory and are improving. The school's parents are ambitious for their children and are often pressured for time by busy lifestyles. Hence, parents' perceptions of these aspects depend on historical knowledge of the school and are not a true reflection of the present position.

33. The headteacher wants parents to be confident in approaching the school, and to listen to their views. The headteacher and staff are regularly seen in the playground talking to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. There is an open door policy, but communications with teachers are made difficult by the layout of the school, and parents do not have access to Reception classes at the start of the day. The school has researched parents' views in the last year, but has not fed back its findings. It receives few complaints from parents and is surprised by the range of the dissatisfaction levels of a minority of parents that have surfaced during the inspection. The headteacher and the staff are not always able to satisfy all parents' requests, and their attempts at change are not always well understood by all parents. The school would benefit from a review of communications methods to ensure a better understanding of school issues by all parents.

34. Although there is no parents' policy, most parents have signed the home/school agreement and fulfil their pledge through their children's very good attendance and assisting them with homework. The school is not proactive enough with parents in discussing how they might help their children or in explaining new education strategies and initiatives. The information for parents is good overall. The prospectus lacks interest, but the annual governors' report to parents is thorough and represents the essential character of the school. Annual reports to parents are very good and contain very informative statements of children's progress and effort during the year. Future target areas are suggested and pupils' written reviews of their year at school are perceptive. Regular newsletters are improving parents' awareness of school issues and the website is developing well. The school wants parents to help in the school but helpers tend to be in the lower school classes. Parent governor positions are filled capably and the Parent/Staff Association supports the school very well through fund raising.

35. The school enjoys strong relationships with the local community. Relationships with the local church thrive. The school uses the church as a place of worship and for festivals, and also to bring many classes together for religious education in ample facilities. The vicar and lay preacher are regular visitors to assemblies and are part of school life. The town's museums and adjacent areas are important resources for the practical teaching of some subjects of the National Curriculum and for multicultural visits. The school has good links to football and cricket clubs to stimulate pupils' interest in sport and supplement the school's limited facilities. People from the local community are welcomed into the school to contribute to pupils' learning, and the school is active in supporting local and national charities.

36. The very good relationships with pre-schools enable Reception children to make a flying start at the school. The school has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with local primary schools. Staff make good contacts with their colleagues in other schools, and governors enjoy joint training. Gifted and talented pupils meet together for focused teaching sessions. Secondary schools make a significant contribution to pupils' learning in some academic subjects, especially in ICT and design and technology. Parents receive knowledgeable and informative advice as the time for transfer to secondary school approaches, and the transfer of information is especially detailed for pupils with SEN. The high levels of confidence of pupils, and their working knowledge of their destination secondary school, enable them to make an anxiety-free transition.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed well. Governance is satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership, supported well by other key staff. Management of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are gaining confidence in their role, becoming more challenging of the school and beginning to think more strategically.
- In a relatively short time, the headteacher has assembled an effective senior team who share his clear vision for the school.
- The school's priorities are soundly based and supported well in the school's strategic planning.
- There is a sharp focus on accurate and effective self-evaluation of the school's work.
- The headteacher and governing body have a cautious approach to financial planning, and strategic planning does not take enough account of the school's large inherited cash balances.
- Best value principles are not understood well enough.

Commentary

37. The governing body is highly supportive of the school and genuinely wants the best for it. As governors have had access to better quality information about the school's performance, for example, through the annual statistical report provided by Ofsted, they have become more challenging to the school and are asking the right questions of the headteacher and senior team. At the time of the previous inspection, governors were involved in monitoring the progress of the school development plan, but were not involved in its production. They now take a much earlier

role in the development of its priorities, based on the school's overarching aims. Individual governors take responsibility for areas of the school's work and show a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their areas, and of the governing body's role in school.

38. The headteacher is relatively new to the school. He quickly assembled an effective senior team, based on the existing and very capable deputy headteacher and leaders of the infant and junior sections of the school. These senior leaders have had a good impact on the school, through the quality of their own work and their unswerving dedication to the school's aims. They are now developing the leadership of the curricular co-ordinators so that they can become true subject leaders, taking responsibility for all aspects of their subjects and being pro-active in raising standards further. Some co-ordinators are new in this role, or are inexperienced in teaching, but they all share an enthusiasm for their role and have already, in most cases, carried out evaluations of their areas preparatory to making further improvements.

39. Overall management is satisfactory. The headteacher, with the aid of his able deputy headteacher and senior management team, has accurately identified priorities for improvement through the school development plan. They have developed a good, sharp focus on self-evaluation, and in particular have put into place a plan to track and improve standards across the curriculum. This plan involves the subject co-ordinators in a common approach to monitoring and evaluating the standards in their own subject. To date, this has created a significant improvement in the monitoring of English and mathematics, but is yet to have an impact on standards in other areas of the curriculum. Performance management is well established throughout the school and contributes effectively to staff development and raising standards.

40. The financial management of the school is cautious in approach and office procedures are efficient. The headteacher inherited a large positive balance, which has since increased further. There are ideas for its use, but these are underdeveloped as plans, and are not part of the school's strategic planning. School improvements to date have not relied upon high spending. In comparison with other schools, teacher budgets are very low, whilst support staff budgets are very high. Although standards have improved since the last inspection and behaviour is very good, this allocation of financial resources has not been reviewed or challenged by governors. Expenditure on learning resources and staff development is low in comparison with other schools, and learning resources are only satisfactory. The school does not have enough awareness of the principles of best value. Due to the restrained financial spending plans, the cost of educating each pupil is well below the national average for primary schools. When these costs are set against the good standards achieved, the good quality of education, the good leadership and management of the school, the good improvement since the last inspection, and the good ethos of the school, the school gives good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	997,772.00
Total expenditure	932,519.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,159.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	45,999.00
Balance carried forward to the next	111,252.00

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. Children who are five years old between September and December start school at the beginning of the autumn term. The remaining children start school at the beginning of the spring term, but those children who have their fifth birthday in the summer term attend on a part-time basis until Easter. The two Reception classes each have a mix of older and younger children. However, for some activities children are taught in age groups. Staff regularly review this and the groupings are flexible. When they start school, children's attainment is above average. Teachers and support staff work well together. Arrangements for children to start school are good. There are effective links with pre-school settings and children are invited to visit with their parents or carers before starting school. Staff plan well together to ensure that children in both classes are well supported and have access to the same range of learning opportunities. There are regular assessments of children. However, many of the observations focus on what children are doing at a given time and are not well focused on what they are learning. Observations are not well linked to the Early Learning Goals and do not identify the next steps of children's learning. Staff are effectively tracking children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals, using the school's own baseline assessment system.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are confident learners who enjoy school.
- Adults are good role models for children and help them to develop their social skills.
- Relationships are very good.
- The majority of the children are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year.

Commentary

42. There are very good relationships between children and adults. Teachers and learning support assistants are good role models for children. They provide a good range of opportunities to help the children develop their social skills. In the role play area (a 'travel agent's shop'), adults modelled play for the children, helping them to play co-operatively. The children are helpful and co-operative. They are developing very good attitudes towards their work and show good concentration. The children show a good understanding of the class rules and can explain what they are or are not allowed to do. When given the opportunity, they can choose and manage their own activities and resources. However, the opportunities for independent learning are often limited. Nonetheless, many children are already meeting the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning, and the majority are likely to exceed them by the end of the year, representing good achievement. Teaching in this area of learning is good overall, although there are weaknesses in the provision of independent learning opportunities for children. When children are free to choose their own activities, once they have chosen, the tasks are sometimes over directed and there are

limited opportunities for them to make their own choices about learning. The objectives for independent activities are not always clear or linked to the Early Learning Goals.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have well-developed speaking skills.
- Teaching of reading and writing is good.
- Children's attainment is above average.

Commentary

43. When they start school, the majority of children are confident, fluent speakers. They are happy to talk to visitors about their activities and are keen to join in class discussions. There is a lot of lively talk as children play together. They greatly enjoy listening to stories and readily ask and answer questions about the stories they hear. They enjoy joining in with repeated parts of stories. The children are developing a good range of vocabulary. Many are already meeting the Early Learning Goals for reading. They show good knowledge of sounds and enjoy rhymes. They link sounds to letters correctly and several have good early reading skills. Even the younger children, some of whom have only started school in January, are making good progress in their reading skills. Several children are writing at early National Curriculum levels. They write simple sentences using capital letters and full stops. They can spell simple words correctly and make good phonetic attempts at other words. The younger children can write their names and enjoy practising writing in a range of situations. Teachers provide a range of activities to support reading and writing. In the role play area there are opportunities for children to write. However, opportunities for children to choose a writing activity during independent sessions are less well developed. Most children are likely to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the year and are achieving well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in mathematical development is good.
- Children make good progress in their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

44. Little direct teaching of mathematical activities was observed during the inspection. However, teachers' planning and work in children's folders show that a good range of mathematical work is covered and that teaching is good. In some independent sessions, children were confidently creating repeating patterns using three colours. They count accurately to 8 when making models of spiders, knowing that spiders have eight legs. Work in children's folders shows that they are confident in matching numbers and objects. They can sequence numbers and identify which number is one more than or less than a given number. Some children have very good knowledge of mathematical vocabulary. For example, they are able to explain what 'symmetrical' means. They confidently recognise number when throwing dice and count the corresponding number of objects. A small

number of children are not secure in writing numbers correctly; they know the numbers but reverse some of them when writing. Planning for mathematics activities shows an emphasis on teaching children the language of above, below, in front, behind and other vocabulary relating to position, and developing addition skills. In discussion, children were able to name shapes and colours accurately. Many children are meeting the Early Learning Goals for mathematical development and most are likely to do so by the end of the year, representing good achievement.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very good general knowledge.
- They are curious and keen to find out about their surroundings.
- Opportunities for investigation and independent learning are not well developed.

Commentary

45. Children start school with a good level of general knowledge. They show curiosity and are interested in finding out about the world. They make good progress and exceed the Early Learning Goals, achieving well, as the result of good teaching. When talking about the story of Anansi the Spiderman, children showed very good knowledge of countries and were able to find them on a large map. This is well above the expected level of attainment for this age. They also know that the Anansi stories are set in a hot country. In the role play area (a 'travel agent's shop'), children talked about different countries and how they could travel to them. In a discussion about the illustrations for a story, children suggested that some animals have whiskers round their eyes to protect them from the dust. Children enjoy using computers and are confident in using the mouse to move objects on the screen and to play games. They enjoy using the 'paint' program to make pictures. In all the activities observed, children are making good progress. However, teachers' planning does not show evidence of a range of activities to give children opportunities to explore their environment and investigate how things work. Some of the independent activities were very directed by adults and did not give children enough scope to discover things for themselves.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use small tools confidently.
- Children are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals for physical development.

Commentary

46. During the inspection there was little direct observation of the teaching of physical development. In the outdoor learning area children played safely and confidently, showing

awareness of the space around them. At present there is no fixed climbing apparatus but children have access to climbing equipment in specific physical development lessons. This was not observed. In the classroom most children have good hand control and use pencils, brushes and other tools with confidence and safety. They use a range of construction toys to build models and are developing good co-ordination. Children are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning and to achieve well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of activities provided for creative development is limited.
- Some of the activities are over-directed by adults.

COMMENTARY

47. Very little provision for creative development was observed during the inspection. Whilst provision is satisfactory, this area is a comparative weakness in Reception. No music or dance activities were observed. Children do have opportunities to explore colour and texture. They paint and draw, but there was little evidence of exploring texture and shape, using a range of media. A mask-making activity was very adult-directed and allowed children very little scope to use their imagination. Much of the artwork involves templates that result in the outcomes being very similar. Children are not given enough scope to use their imagination and make choices about their creative work. Nevertheless, they are on track to meet the Early Learning Goals, and achieve satisfactorily.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Both subject leaders are very good role models in teaching English.
- The teaching of group reading is inconsistent across the school.
- There is a good focus on the development of creative writing, notably the various styles of poetry.
- The marking of pupils' work and the use of target setting are variable and do not provide specific steps for improvement.
- Good links are made with history to develop pupils' writing.
- The teaching of compositional writing varies across Years 3 to 6.

COMMENTARY

48. All pupils, including those with SEN, achieve well in English.

49. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils are attaining standards in speaking and listening that are well above expectations. In Year 2, pupils talk and listen confidently in a range of contexts and, in Year 6, pupils vary their expression and vocabulary. An excellent example, which contributed effectively to such standards, was seen in Year 6, where 'partner talk' was planned for carefully. This provided opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of poetic form.

50. Standards in reading are also well above national expectations in Years 2 and 6. In lessons observed, pupils in Year 2 read text confidently for research purposes, using a CD ROM. In Year 6, pupils were able to refer to the text when explaining their views and to select essential points to support them. However, teachers are not consistent when teaching reading; the levels of skills of pupils are not always sufficiently taken into account.

51. Analysis and observations during the inspection indicate that pupils' standards of writing in Years 2 and 6 are well above national expectations. In Year 2, work on display and in pupils' books shows that sequences of sentences extend ideas logically, and the basic grammatical structure of sentences is usually correct. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 use related texts, such as the 'Handa' stories, to inspire pupils' reading and writing. In Year 6, pupils' creative writing is varied and interesting. A very good range of poetic styles and imaginative writing was seen. Teachers use poetry by well-known authors to inspire pupils' own writing. However, teachers' expectations of how pupils will plan, draft, present and organise their writing vary, although a Year 6 display provided good evidence of planning and presentation of writing for an ICT PowerPoint presentation, taking into account content and style of presentation.

52. Teaching and learning are good, with examples of very good and excellent teaching. The excellent lesson in Year 6 was characterised by:

- excellent, well focused questioning and explanation linked to the learning intention, providing clarity for the pupils;
- excellent structured step-by-step tasks which highly challenged pupils;
- excellent teamwork with the learning support assistant;
- the teacher's very good demonstration of the writing task to the pupils.

The pupils achieved very highly and thoroughly enjoyed the lesson.

53. Some marking is consistently linked to the lesson's learning objective and contributes well to pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. However, not all marking is of this high quality. As a result, pupils are not always sure how to improve their work. A very good example of sharing group targets with pupils and marking towards them was seen in the work of Year 3 pupils. This identified specific points for development for various ability groups, thus challenging them and providing steps for improvement at their level.

54. The leadership and management of English are good. Both subject leaders are very good role models in teaching English, showing very good enthusiasm and knowledge and understanding of the subject. They liaise effectively to ensure that pupils meet progressively harder work as they move through the school, and that the work completed by different classes in each year is consistent. They are using and building on monitoring evidence to further plan for the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they are in the process of developing staff's knowledge and understanding of assessing against the National Curriculum level descriptors in order to build on marking and target setting systems.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. The teaching of literacy skills through other subjects across the school is developing. It is good in history and is developing in ICT, art and design, geography and religious education. There was good use of the history topic on World War II to encourage the writing of a range of poems and imaginative work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- in the Year 6 national tests in 2004, pupils reached standards that were well above the national average
- Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school, and marking in Years 2, 3 and 6 is particularly constructive.
- Pupils have a good understanding of number and place value.
- Pupils are given too few opportunities to use and apply their knowledge of mathematics, with the result that pupils find difficulty with questions that demand reasoning.
- There is limited evidence of data handling in the books of pupils in Year 2 or in those of lower-attaining pupils in Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy the subject enormously and are fully involved in their own learning.

Commentary

56. There have been considerable improvements in standards and teaching since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well in Year 2 and very well in Year 6, with standards above average in Year 2 and well above average by Year 6. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 are already working at National Curriculum Level 3 in some aspects of the subject, such as the subtraction of tens and units, and in recognising shapes by the number of sides and corners. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 2 achieve well, reaching average standards. The setting of pupils in Years 4 to 6 is very successful. Standards reached in lessons were above average, overall, in Year 3 and well above average in Year 4. The middle group in Year 5 reached well above average standards in the lesson observed. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 reached high standards in the lesson observed, for example in using different strategies to solve problems. They use very good mental processes and adapt systematic ways to find answers. They are often reaching well above average standards in work recorded in their books, for example in their understanding of probability and in calculating averages from a set of data. Lower-attaining pupils are very well supported through 'Booster' groups and enjoy the success they gain through these. Whilst work in their books is at average levels, there is limited evidence of data handling in Year 2, and almost no evidence of using and applying mathematics or handling data in the case of lower-attaining pupils in Year 6. There was no evidence of any difference between the standards reached by boys and girls in their books or in lessons, although boys were sometimes more forthcoming in answering questions in lessons. Throughout the school, there is little evidence of pupils using and applying what they have learned.

57. Teaching and learning are very good across the school, and sometimes excellent. Teachers and pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy the mental challenges the subject demands. The involvement of pupils in their own learning is a particular strength. Pupils take a pride in their work throughout the school, setting their work out clearly in their books. Teachers mark pupils' work well, providing helpful comments to show them how to improve. Assessment is used very well to place pupils in groups and sets and to analyse where weaknesses lie.

58. The headteacher is acting as co-ordinator for a term. The subject has been, and is, very well led and managed. Lesson observations are thorough, and constructive criticism is given. The deputy headteacher has recently carried out a very detailed analysis of the results of mathematics tests and is aware of where improvements need to be made. This analysis shows weaknesses across the school to be in work on equivalents and reasoning, and that the strengths are in ordering and number sequences.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

There is some evidence of numeracy being used across other subjects, such as in design and technology and geography, but this is an area that, like using and applying mathematics, is underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because they are very keen to learn and are taught well.
- Pupils are motivated by the good curriculum and wide range of enrichment activities.
- The lack of consistency in teaching limits the achievement of some pupils and there are too few opportunities for investigative work.
- Assessment is not used enough to help the pupils know how to improve their work.

Commentary

59. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. In Year 2 standards are above average, and in Year 6 they are well above average. The achievement of pupils with SEN is good because they are well supported in lessons by learning support assistants.

60. The pupils behave very well, enjoy lessons and achieve high standards because they are enthusiastic and because the teaching is good. In particular, the teaching of scientific knowledge is well organised and thorough, and pupils have good opportunities to learn through practical work. However, there are too few opportunities for the pupils to put their scientific knowledge into practice through investigative work, and this limits their learning.

61. By Year 6, pupils gain an extensive knowledge of different aspects of science. For example, they were able to talk in depth about a range of living things, including micro-organisms and their harmful effects. The Year 2 pupils had a lively conversation about healthy foods, keeping fit and the effects that exercise had had on their pulse rates. In some of the more challenging aspects of the subject, such as the study of forces, not all staff are confident enough to provide sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils.

62. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well organised and interesting, ensuring that the pupils are engaged in their learning. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to use an increasingly wide range of methods to record their work, including graphs, tables, accounts, lists and instructions. In addition, the marking of some work is designed to give the pupils encouragement and a clear idea about what they should do next to improve. These teaching methods are effective in developing independent learning; however, not all pupils have these opportunities, as the approach throughout the school is not yet consistent.

63. The good curriculum is enriched through very strong links with local secondary schools, school science weeks, visits, visitors, and good links with English, mathematics and other subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils were keen to describe not only the science but also the art and geography learned in their Rain Forest topic. Year 5 pupils spoke knowledgeably about the solar system, incorporating science, art, English, mathematics, music and a visit to the Science Museum. Pupils in Year 6 were particularly enthusiastic about their work with the visiting secondary school teacher. However, ICT and homework are not yet consistently used to enhance learning.

64. The relatively new subject leader, with the very effective support of the deputy headteacher, is managing the subject well. She has made good progress in gaining information about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has developed a comprehensive action plan for improvement. She has identified the need to use data on the achievement of pupils more effectively and is keen to develop her leadership role. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the school's provision in science and in the standards achieved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 2 and 6.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively across the curriculum.
- Resources for ICT are good.
- Provision for ICT is enhanced by effective links with a local secondary school.
- The ICT suite is cramped and limits some teaching opportunities.
- The laptops are not available to classes on the lower floor.

Commentary

65. At the time of the previous inspection, the provision for ICT was judged to be needing improvement. There was little evidence of progression in skills, knowledge and understanding across year groups, and some elements of the required programmes of study were not taught effectively. Since that time, staff have worked hard to address these issues. In Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment in ICT is now above average. Infant pupils are confident in using computers. They quickly find the program they need and are able to find information. They understand that a CD ROM contains much information and use their knowledge of how non-fiction books are organised to explore contents and index pages.

66. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are able to use a variety of programs. They can send and receive emails, use text and graphics in documents, and change the size, colour and style of text. Pupils in Year 5 have used a program to produce different models to plan a bedroom, working to a fixed budget. They are also learning how to use spreadsheets, work which is developed further in Year 6. Pupils showed good recall of their earlier work on spreadsheets as they modelled designs for a tuck shop. Work on display and discussions with pupils show that they have produced multimedia presentations and designed websites. Pupils are confident users of ICT and are enthusiastic about the subject.

67. All aspects of the subject are now taught, and skills are taught progressively throughout the school. There has been regular training for staff and, as a result, teachers' confidence in ICT is much improved since the last inspection. The resources for ICT have been developed. The school now has a set of laptop computers that can be used in different classrooms. However, these are not, as yet, available to classes on the lower floor. The school now has the necessary equipment to enable the required programmes of study to be taught. There are very effective links with a local secondary school to support the teaching and learning of ICT. Pupils in Year 6 visit on a regular basis and benefit from specialist teaching. In these lessons, pupils are able to work individually on computers and this helps their progress.

68. Whilst the school has an ICT suite, this accommodation is rather cramped, particularly for older pupils. It is difficult for staff to move around the room to support pupils and, in some of the lessons observed, this had an impact on pupils' progress as they had to wait for support if they were not sure what to do. It was also difficult for adults to assess pupils' work quickly and address their queries.

69. Teaching in ICT is good overall. Teaching in half of the small number of lessons observed was satisfactory. However, further evidence was gained from teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work. School records show that there has been a lot of professional development in ICT, and further work is planned. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

70. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator provides a good role model for other staff and pupils and has a clear understanding of how the subject needs to develop next.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

71. Staff have worked hard at planning regular opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum. Word-processing is used regularly in many subjects. Pupils in Year 6 have used the PowerPoint program to produce presentations about the Blitz for their history work. In mathematics, pupils use programs to present data in graphs and charts. They

have also used sensors to measure light, sound and temperature in their science work. Pupils use paint and drawing tools to support their artwork. They also use the Publisher program to design websites and posters. Pupils in Year 5 have used the internet to research topics such as 'recycling' and 'the greenhouse effect' for their work in geography. Year 6 planning includes a topic for the summer term with the local secondary school, combining ICT with design and technology, and using control technology. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

72. History and geography were not a focus during the inspection. Therefore, no judgements about teaching or provision can be made. No lessons were observed in history, although in discussion pupils could recall their work in history with enthusiasm. One lesson in geography was seen in Year 4. This was a good lesson because the teacher made effective use of ICT to enable pupils to use research skills to make comparisons between regions of India. Pupils were able to compare similarities and differences of various localities and offer reasonable explanations for their location.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils produced well above average standards of work in Year 5.
- There is a limited amount of recorded work in all classes except Year 5.
- Planning is very good.
- The school uses resources well.

Commentary

73. Standards, overall, are in line with those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus in Years 2 and 6. They are above average in Year 5. There was not enough evidence to judge achievement in Year 2, but pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 3, 4 and 6, and very well in Year 5. In the lesson observed, Year 2 pupils learned about pilgrimage but found the idea difficult. A scrutiny of work shows that Year 1 have thought about 'being special' and 'celebrations', and Year 2 have studied some aspects of Judaism, such as the Puja plate. However, there is little recorded work, and the depth of knowledge could not be judged. This was also a concern at the last inspection. There is also a lack of recorded work in Years 3, 4 and 6. However, the quality of work in Year 5 is very good and is above average. Pupils in Year 5 show a good understanding of the 'sacred' and have knowledge of how the Bible is used by people personally and in public, such as in courts. Pupils know about Abraham, Moses and John the Baptist and have made a booklet about the life of Joseph. Their timelines on Early Jewish History are especially helpful. Pupils in this year group can give reasons why Jesus is special and why people keep Remembrance Day and Shabbat. This detail of knowledge is not reflected in other year groups, although practical work and discussions do take place.

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 2. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are good overall. Strengths are in the teachers' planning and in pupils' very good behaviour and interest in the subject. In some lessons, teachers demonstrate very well how pupils should set out their work. Teaching is enthusiastic in all classes and, where lessons are taught in two separate sessions, pupils are able to cover a topic in more depth than was possible at the time of the last inspection. Teaching and learning about a Hindu shrine were good, with pupils fascinated by the artefacts, which they treated with respect. Pupils achieved well, showing sustained concentration

and good literacy skills. In this lesson pupils had a very accurate understanding of the Hindu belief in Brahman and the worship of different gods. Teachers generally have satisfactory subject knowledge, but occasionally incorrect information is implied. Satisfactory links are made with other subjects, for example with history when pupils learned about the faith of Corrie Ten Boom in the Second World War. Pupils also considered how they could 'stand by' someone in a time of trouble. A particular strength in teaching in Year 6 was the one-to-one discussions the teacher had with individual pupils as they worked.

75. The local adviser has contributed greatly to the success of the subject, with lesson plans to assist teachers. These match the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus and are much appreciated by staff, who enjoy teaching to them. The subject is satisfactorily managed by the co-ordinator, who teaches part time. The school has some good resources, both within school and in the locality. Although there have been some improvements, overall, standards and provision in the subject are similar to those at the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

76. These subjects were not a focus for the inspection and no secure judgements on teaching and provision can be made. Two lessons were seen in art and design, and work and displays were scrutinised. Standards seen are above national expectations. Pupils enjoy art and design, and their work shows good attention to detail. Two physical education lessons were seen and extra-curricular clubs were observed. The school works hard to overcome the limitations inherent in its site, and the standards observed are in line with national expectations. A good range of clubs and activities supplements the school's provision, as does the link with Colchester United Football Club. No lessons could be observed in music or design and technology, but work on display shows standards in design and technology to be above expectations across the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

77. No secure judgements about provision can be made because no lessons were observed. However, planning indicates that all the required areas, for example sex and drugs education, are covered in the timetabled lessons. These also cover other aspects, for example the effects of bullying and relationships, as well as statutorily required content. Planning also indicates that elements of citizenship are incorporated into the programme.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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