

INSPECTION REPORT

HOME FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114752

Headteacher: Mrs P M Oliver

Lead inspector: Mr P B McAlpine

Dates of inspection: 6-8 December 2004

Inspection number: 267066

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:	5-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	196
School address:	Shelley Road Lexden Colchester Essex
Postcode:	CO3 4JL
Telephone number:	01206 577430
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Higham
Date of previous inspection:	28 June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is of average size. There are 196 pupils on roll, organised into seven classes, one per year group. Attainment on entry varies annually depending on the particular abilities of the pupils but is generally above average. About half the pupils come from the immediate locality. The remainder come from further afield, reflecting parental preference. The socio-economic circumstances of the locality are generally above average. Fewer than five per cent of the pupils are eligible for a free school meal. Ninety-five per cent of pupils are from White British families. The others are from mixed ethnic and minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs, eight per cent, is below the national average. The most significant special educational needs are moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is also below average. Pupil mobility is low. The school received the Investors in People award in 2004 and the Schools' Curriculum Award in 2002, especially for its work with the local community. It received an achievement award in 2001.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21552	Mr P B McAlpine	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language
19342	Mr T Heavey	Lay inspector	
32475	Mr N Butt	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Music Religious education
22147	Mrs A Holland	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school. Pupils work very hard and nearly all of them achieve as well as predicted by their attainment on entry and in English, they do better. They like school and behave very well. Teaching is good overall, with several very good features and only a few aspects for improvement. Pupils are learning quickly and with enjoyment. The headteacher has united the staff and the pupils and has created a very good ethos for learning. Management is effective. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- achievement in reading is good and standards in this aspect are well above average in Year 6;
- there has been good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology and standards are well above average;
- the personal development of the pupils, including their attitudes and behaviour, is very good;
- achievement in writing and mathematics is variable between ability groups and a small proportion of the more able and the less able pupils could do better.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. All of the issues identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. In addition to the good improvement in information and communication technology, there has been good improvement in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.¹ Standards in Year 6 have improved satisfactorily over time but there has not been enough improvement in standards in Year 2.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 satisfactory overall and is good in reading. The substantial majority of pupils are working close to their potential as predicted by their attainment on entry, though with a few variations between subjects. In the Foundation Stage, achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average. In reading, almost all pupils are doing as well as can be expected. Achievement is good throughout the school in information and communication technology and is satisfactory in writing, mathematics, and science. In these latter subjects, the substantial majority do as well as predicted by their attainment on entry but a small minority, mainly the more able and the less able, could do better. The standard of current work in Year 6 is well above average in English, mainly because of high standards in reading. Standards in mathematics and science in Year 6 are above average. In Year 2, standards are above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. **The pupils' personal development, including their attitudes, values and other qualities**

¹ The Foundation Stage at this school is in the Reception year.

are very good. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and they behave very well. Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, with very good features and a few aspects for improvement. There is high quality, inspirational teaching that leads to pupils working very hard and to all of them learning quickly. Much of the teaching is effective and leads to nearly all pupils making worthwhile gains. In a minority of lessons, although of satisfactory quality for the majority in the class, a few of the more able and less able pupils are not productively engaged in learning because the teaching does not take enough account of their needs. The curriculum is generally lively and interesting and it provides a good range of activities outside of lessons. Levels of care and support are good and the pupils' views are valued appropriately. The partnership with parents is very good. Links with the community are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is producing a very good ethos and helping nearly all pupils to give of their best. Where there are exceptions, the headteacher is aware of these and working to remedy them. Governance is good and all relevant statutory requirements are met including those for racial equality. Governors support the school well and are committed to doing their best for the pupils and their parents. Management is generally effective but the procedures for evaluating school performance, especially teaching and learning, lack rigour, particularly where these are delegated to subject managers.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents and pupils have positive views of the school. The pupils enjoy school life. Parents readily offer their support and appreciate the information provided by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- make the achievement of pupils consistently good by raising the quality of teaching in all classes to that of the best;
- improve the effectiveness of subject management so that it identifies and shares good practice in teaching and in the use of assessment consistently and systematically throughout the school;
- make effective the arrangements for school self-evaluation and strategic planning and make clear the links between them.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is satisfactory overall with some good and very good features. Attainment on entry varies annually from above average to below but is above average in most years. Current standards in the Foundation Stage are above average overall. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are average in writing, mathematics and science, and above average in reading. In Years 3 to 6, standards are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The variation in standards between the key stages² mainly reflects the varying abilities of particular groups of pupils on entry to school rather than teacher effectiveness. Progress in these core subjects³ is satisfactory throughout the school. In information and communication technology, standards are well above average throughout and achievement is good. Standards in religious education are above average throughout and achievement is also good. Other subjects were not a focus of the inspection and neither achievement nor standards were evaluated.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in information and communication technology are well above average and achievement is good.
- Pupils achieve well in reading and in religious education.
- Most pupils are working as well as can be expected, but a few could do better.

Commentary

1. The achievement of the great majority of pupils is consistent with their capacity for learning. The teaching challenges the average and more able pupils, who generally attain as highly as pupils of similar abilities in other schools. A small minority of pupils are not achieving as close to their potential as others because work is not always matched precisely to their needs. This group includes the most able and the least able pupils. While teaching is generally good there is sometimes narrowness in the methods used, which leads to variations in the quality of the differentiated work set. In reading, information and communication technology and religious education, all pupils achieve well because work is carefully graded according to their abilities. These subjects are taught using a wider range of methods.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.6 (17.7)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.9 (15.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.0 (17.3)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

² The Foundation Stage at this school is the Reception year. Key Stage 1 is formed from Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 2 comprises Years 3 to 6.

³ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science. All other subjects are the non-core subjects.

- In the Reception year, achievement is satisfactory in all areas of learning and standards are above average. This represents an improvement compared to the previous inspection. Test results in Year 2 in 2004 were above the national average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. These results are consistent with standards on entry for this year group and represent satisfactory achievement. Results fluctuate from year to year because year groups are small and attainment on entry varies. In 2004 and in the current Year 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 is smaller in writing and mathematics than is typical in other schools. This is because the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.5 (28.6)	26.9 (26.9)
mathematics	28.3 (29.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.7 (29.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- In Year 6, test results in 2004 were well above the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Compared to schools with similar standards in Year 2 in 2000, these results were much better in English, not as good in mathematics, and similar in science. This shows that there was some underachievement in mathematics at that time. Results in English are rising strongly, with less discernable progress in mathematics and science. The overall trend is better than the national trend in Year 6 over recent years.
- In past years, boys have done better than girls, especially in mathematics, but the difference in achievement is currently not significant. There is variation from year group to year group in pupils' abilities, but inspection findings confirm that girls are achieving as well as boys in all subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving satisfactorily. The majority have difficulties with literacy and numeracy. They are making steady progress in reading. Their needs in mathematics are less well met and progress is slower. This is one reason why the proportion of pupils not attaining nationally expected levels is greater in mathematics than in English. The achievement of academically gifted pupils is good in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, reflecting greater effectiveness in the provision for these pupils in the older year groups. Too few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds to draw firm conclusions about the performance of particular groups.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Very good opportunities exist for the personal development of pupils. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The very high attendance achieved is within the top 10 per cent of schools throughout the country.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and have a real thirst for knowledge.
- Pupils' display high levels of courtesy and consideration for others.

- Very good parental support and high levels of enthusiasm among pupils leads to their very good attendance.

Commentary

5. All pupils behave very well and have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. The very effective rewards system is consistently applied by all members of staff. In each classroom a display is devoted to pupils’ personal development setting out school rules and celebrating achievements and this is good practice. School assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to share their experiences and successes with their peers.
6. Adults and pupils enjoy very good relationships, and pupils show care and consideration towards one another. The school has a very peaceful and happy atmosphere in which pupils have a great desire to learn. Their attitudes in lessons are exemplary, listening carefully and getting on with work productively. They are enthusiastic and appreciative of all the school provides for them.
7. There are regular opportunities for pupils to share together any concerns or ideas they may have in class through circle time⁴. These occasions have helped to develop an awareness of the needs of others and a tolerance of difference. Consequently, incidents of racism, harassment and other forms of bullying are extremely rare and are dealt with very effectively. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
8. Pupils’ self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are well developed through assemblies, circle time and moments of awe and wonder in lessons. Some of the teaching inspires pupils through its freshness and brilliance. A performance by pupils using puppets brought home the Christmas message in a powerful way during one assembly. Cultural awareness is well developed through a variety of enriching experiences, including preparing pupils for living in a multi-cultural society. Children in the Foundation Stage are on course to exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development by the time they enter Year 1.
9. Systems to monitor absence are very effective and well known to parents. The continuing very high attendance levels since the previous inspection reflect the effectiveness of the school’s procedures and its high expectations of pupils and their families. Parents, by helping their children to arrive on time each day show their active support for the school’s strong ethos. For their part, pupils respond very positively to the wishes of school and parents by attending regularly and punctually, thus reaping maximum benefit from the full school day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.4	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

⁴ Circle time refers to short lessons that focus on personal development issues. The name comes from the seating arrangement, which is usually a large circle.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good with some inspirational examples and a few aspects for improvement. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide learning experiences that are interesting and varied.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour.
- The use of the new interactive whiteboards stimulates learning.
- In a few cases, work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities.

Commentary

10. Over four fifths of lessons seen are good or better, double the proportion of such lessons observed at the time of the last inspection. This is better than is found in the majority of other schools. A main strength is teachers' high expectations of pupils, with a clear focus on what they want them to learn. Teachers plan well and use strategies that appeal to pupils and which gain their interest. For example, in Year 5 in religious education, pupils enjoyed making Christingles and drew with great care diagrams explaining their significance to Christians. None of the teaching is unsatisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8 (26%)	17 (57%)	5 (17%)	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.

11. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. Children experience a wide and appropriate range of activities in all areas of learning. During the inspection the focus on preparing for the Christmas production boosted children's confidence as they performed and sang in front of an audience. Thorough day-to-day assessments of what children can do inform lesson planning.
12. Just over a quarter of lessons seen were very good, with some inspirational features. These very good lessons were taught by teachers who have very good subject knowledge and know their pupils very well. They inject a brisk pace into lessons and challenge pupils to extend their thinking. A sensitive discussion about loneliness in a Year 4 personal, social and health education lesson enabled pupils to explore their feelings in a safe and secure setting. In a small minority of lessons a narrow range of methods meant that the teaching met some but not all the needs of pupils; work that was too much alike was set for pupils of widely differing abilities.
13. The school has satisfactory strategies for monitoring progress by gathering data from national and other tests. The data is used to highlight strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for individual pupils in English and mathematics. These targets are then shared with them so they know what they have to do to improve. In the non-core subjects, pupils' progress is not closely monitored. Some general impressions are recorded but these are not assigned National Curriculum levels of attainment.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum with good opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources for learning are generally good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided after school for pupils to participate in the arts and sport, and the curriculum is enriched by visits.
- Learning experiences are interesting and varied.
- Provision in religious education is good, and in personal, social and health education it is very good.

Commentary

14. The school has successfully tackled the issues identified in the last inspection report. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is now planned in line with the nationally agreed curriculum for children of this age. Provision for information and communication technology has improved and is now good.
15. Provision for children in the Reception class is good. It is planned carefully in line with national guidance. All areas of learning are covered well. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is also good; it is well planned and interesting, covering all the required aspects. Teachers plan carefully both to ensure that all subjects are covered at a level suitable to each age group and that the learning experiences offered to the pupils are varied. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are being implemented satisfactorily. The Additional Literacy Support and, in mathematics, the Springboard programmes have been introduced to support learning in these subjects. The school has also adopted the Early Reading Research programme to improve attainment in English throughout the school. Opportunities for investigative science are increasing but not all pupils have opportunities to record their own findings using technical language. In most classes, teachers are skilful in linking aspects of learning in different subjects. This makes learning more coherent and relevant for pupils and helps to reinforce skills and knowledge. Provision for personal social and health education is very good, and includes provision for sex education and drugs awareness. Curriculum provision in religious education is good. This has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
16. The school offers a rich variety of additional activities that successfully enhance the pupils' experiences. These include a residential week for Year 5 and a residential weekend for Year 4 pupils. A wide range of day visits is linked to subjects such as science, history and geography. Pupils have many opportunities to explore the local environment, particularly in relation to geography studies. There are many after school clubs and pupils have many opportunities to take part in competitive sport. Music plays a large part in the life of the school. Peripatetic brass and piano lessons are also available to pupils.
17. The accommodation is good. The school has good outdoor facilities including grassed pitches, hard play areas and a swimming pool. The outdoor area for the Reception class is satisfactory. The computer suite is a useful addition to the school since the previous inspection. Resources throughout the school are good.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Adults in the school provide good levels of support and guidance for those in their care. Arrangements to seek, value and act upon pupils' views are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sensitive arrangements for pupils' welfare make them feel safe and secure.
- The pupils are known very well as individuals and this helps promote their personal development.
- The use of questionnaires and other ways of canvassing pupil opinion helps them to feel that the school values their contributions.

Commentary

18. The main features of the school's care provision are the detailed arrangements for pupils' health and safety. Termly fire drills and risk assessments, weekly alarm tests, and good security arrangements combine well to make pupils feel safe. Training for all staff in child protection awareness, and for all support staff in first aid ensures that all adults in the school are aware of their responsibilities and makes pupils feel cared for.
19. The school knows its pupils well as individuals, and is able to offer them good quality support and guidance tailored to their personal needs, though the strategies for monitoring pupils' academic development are less well developed than those for the monitoring of their personal development. Very good systems of communication within the staff team combine effectively with the very good relationships described elsewhere in this report to build up mutual trust and respect between teacher and pupil. Most pupils report that they would feel easy in approaching an adult in the school with any problems or concerns. Pupils also say that teachers are fair to them, that they get help when they are stuck and that teachers listen to their ideas. The intimate and informal setting of the circle time sessions enables pupils to explore their feelings and to share concerns and ideas with their peers as well as with the teacher. Pupils feel confident in the classroom and are encouraged to work independently through the caring and supportive attitude of teachers and other adults in the school.
20. The establishment of the school council has provided a more formal arrangement for listening to the collective voice of pupils, and its activities introduce them to the principles of democracy and citizenship as they learn to represent the interests of their peers. The pupils themselves control the activities of the school council, making them feel that their views matter, and that they make a valued contribution to the life of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed very strong links with parents and good links with the community. Both of these partnerships are showing an improvement since the previous inspection. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' very positive views of the school make it easier for the school to enlist their support in the education of their children.

- The very good quality of communication between school and home keeps parents well informed about their children's education.
- Parents provide very good support for their children's learning through their involvement with the school as volunteers.

Commentary

21. The overwhelming majority of parents attending the meeting with inspectors and those responding to a questionnaire expressed very positive views about the school. They believe that their children like coming to school, that they make good progress and that they behave well. Parents report that the teaching and management are good, that their children are expected to work hard and are treated fairly, and that the school provides appropriate homework. The school is very popular and about a half of the pupils travels from beyond the immediate area.
22. The very good quality of information provided by the school for parents is epitomised by the detailed annual reports on pupils' progress. Not only do they describe what pupils know and can do, they also identify areas for further effort so that parents are equipped to support their children's learning. Pupils contribute to the report by describing what they enjoyed most during the year, and where they need to work harder. Homework books and home-school contact books are well used as a means of communication between home and school. An informative prospectus and an easily readable governors' annual report comply with legal requirement and are supplemented by an attractive weekly newsletter to ensure that parents are kept up to date with school activities.
23. Parents show that they are eager to support their children's learning by ensuring regular and punctual attendance, by helping with homework, and by using the home-school contact book. Many also become actively involved with school activities by supporting fundraising; arranging visitors to present assembly themes; helping with individual reading sessions; and by helping with swimming practise sessions for galas, and educational trips. Through involvement in these and other such activities parents make a considerable contribution to the education of their children.
24. The good links established with the community help to promote in pupils a sense of citizenship as members of a community beyond the school. Pupils explore their local and more distant community through many educational visits outside the school. Representatives of emergency and civic services, churches, voluntary organisations and local businesses are familiar figures at the school and make a substantial contribution to the academic and personal development of the pupils. For their part, pupils demonstrate their concern for the disadvantaged in society by raising considerable sums of money for charity. Involvement in such activities helps pupils to develop an awareness of their membership of a wider society beyond the school gate.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The governance of the school is good. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory. The governors requested that the inspection team evaluate the effectiveness with which they manage the business of the governing body and this was found to be good. The school does not face any barriers to raising achievement and it is helped in this task by the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and the very good support of parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher motivates her staff and inspires the pupils.
- The governing body is effective.
- The procedures for school self-evaluation lack rigour.

Commentary

25. The headteacher has united the school and has been instrumental in creating its very good ethos. She has established a very orderly, caring establishment where relationships are very good and individuals matter. Her leadership of teaching and the curriculum is good. The members of staff work well together and morale is high. The school is ambitious, putting the success of pupils at the forefront of its endeavours.
26. Governance is good. The governors have been through a process of change, both in membership and of the practices for managing their business. The members of the governing body are enthusiastic and committed supporters of the school. They are effectively helping to shape its vision and direction through their scrutiny and approval of policies and regular involvement in school activities. They actively ensure that all statutory requirements are met, understand the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and its performance, and effectively challenge and support the senior management team. Their decision to replace standing committees with focused working groups convened to resolve particular priorities and then disbanded when the work is complete is effective and has led to much business being efficiently completed. Overall, the efforts made by governors to improve their effectiveness have been successful.
27. Procedures for monitoring performance and evaluating how well the school is doing are broadly satisfactory: assessment and test data are examined, lessons are observed by the headteacher, and samples of work are scrutinised. Priorities for improvement are appropriately identified using this evidence and these priorities are relevant to the school's development needs. However, subject managers are not sufficiently involved in these procedures and this is limiting their opportunity to model and develop good practice in teaching consistently throughout the school. The weaker performance in writing compared to other subjects is recognised from the test results but the narrowness of teaching methods that cause the problem in some classes has not been tackled sufficiently. The statutory elements of performance management are implemented satisfactorily. Training opportunities for members of staff are leading to improvements. Recruitment and retention of staff are managed well. The workload of members of staff and their deployment are satisfactory.
28. Finance and resource management are good. Income and expenditure per pupil are lower than is typically found nationally, though not significantly different from other schools in the local authority. The bulk of the money goes on staffing costs. The school has sufficient resources to teach the curriculum in full. Investment in information and communication technology equipment has been high, with the impact on standards being good. The governors have rightly placed obtaining best value for money central to their approach to financial management.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	550,299
Total expenditure	565,613
Expenditure per pupil (220 pupils)	2,571

Balance from previous year	44,667
Balance carried forward to the next	29,353

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision is good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective and achievement is satisfactory.
- Members of staff have high expectations and children respond positively by behaving very well.
- Every opportunity is taken to develop children's language skills.
- Teaching provides a wide range of activities to support mathematical development which helps children to work close to their potential.

Commentary

29. Provision for children in the Reception class is providing children with a secure, stable start to their educational life. Currently, there are sixteen children in the Reception class; they will be joined by another fourteen children next term. The school has successfully tackled the key issue identified at the time of the last inspection. Teaching is planned in line with the nationally agreed curriculum for children of this age. It takes effective account of the needs of individual children. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. There is a good range of resources in the classroom and an adequate range in the outdoor area. These are used effectively to provide a wide range of appropriate activities to develop children's learning. Teaching is good. Members of the support staff are used effectively and they make a significant contribution to the development of the children. Although there are variations from year to year, children generally enter the Reception class with overall attainment that is above average. All the children currently in the Reception class are likely to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception Year and many will exceed them.
30. As children enter the school from a wide range of pre-school providers, the school is very sensitive to their needs and constantly looks at ways in which it can improve its induction procedures. The home-school contact book is used particularly well and it ensures regular communication between parents and staff. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is an effective leader. Children are assessed regularly on a day-to-day basis and this information contributes to the individual profiles of the children. Provision is evaluated regularly to identify how teaching and learning can be developed to raise standards further.
31. Achievement in **personal, social and emotional development** is satisfactory overall and standards are above average. Nearly all of the children are on course to attain or exceed the national goals for early learning because of the better than average standards on entry and the good teaching they receive. They are developing good attitudes to learning and their self-confidence and independence are increasing. They have regular opportunities to work in groups, to share and to take turns. Although they have opportunities to work independently, there are occasions when they would benefit from increased opportunities to initiate their own learning. Members of staff have high expectations of how children should behave and use good strategies to

develop the children's understanding of right and wrong. The members of staff relate well to the children, who respond positively and enjoy their learning. They sustain good levels of concentration and are very clear about the routines established both in the classroom and in the outdoor area.

32. Achievement in **communication, language and literacy** is satisfactory and standards are above average. Most children enter the Reception class with levels of language above those that are typical for their age. Teaching is effective and many children will exceed the national goals for learning in this area. Speaking and listening skills are fostered particularly well. Adults take every opportunity to extend the children's language and they encourage children to express themselves using the correct terminology. The school has adopted the national Early Reading Research programme and the children are being taught to synthesise and segment words; they can explain the meaning of these terms accurately. They enjoy these formal sessions and their phonic knowledge and their recognition of the key words reflects their enthusiasm for the written word. All the children can write their own name recognisably and they all attempt to write independently. Higher attaining children use their reading skills to help them when they write. Children enjoy books and they are happy to share them with adults. More able children are already reading simple texts and they attempt to decode unknown words confidently.
33. Most children are likely to attain or exceed the national goals for early learning in **mathematical development** and standards are above average. In a very good lesson, children were learning to make and solve their own problems using numbers between 1 and 10. There was a strong element of fun in the lesson which engaged the children and a particularly good feature was the children's recognition of the achievement of others. The outdoor area is used effectively to support number activities. Children enjoy their learning and this is enhancing their mathematical development.
34. Achievement in **knowledge and understanding of the world** is satisfactory overall. Most children are working above levels expected for their age, reflecting better than expected attainment on entry, and standards are above average overall. Curiosity is stimulated by the interesting activities that are planned for them. Children have regular access to computers which they handle with confidence. They know how to access programs, use the mouse and to click and drag pictures. Sand and water play is on going and, in the outdoor area, there is a garden which enables children to observe insects and plants.
35. No sessions were observed where **physical development** was the focus. Scrutiny of planning and discussions with staff indicate that this area of the curriculum is covered satisfactorily. Children have access to a small, secure outdoor area with an adequate supply of large wheeled toys and a variety of small apparatus. They also have indoor physical education lessons in the hall. There is a good range of equipment to develop their hand-to-eye co-ordination within the classroom.
36. No sessions were observed where **creative development** was the focus. However, children have access to paints throughout the day which they use with confidence. An examination of work on display, which included painting and collage work, suggests that children are having good opportunities to use creative materials and that this aspect of their learning has a high status. Opportunities for role-play are good and, during the inspection, the children took part confidently in the Christmas production with Year 1 and Year 2. Children enjoy singing in assemblies and in the Christmas

production and they 'play' instruments when they come in the morning. Assessment records indicate that most children are progressing well in this area of learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in reading. Standards are well above average in Year 6. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading and average in writing. Teaching is good overall; it is more effective in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Almost all pupils do well in reading and standards are high in Year 6.
- The substantial majority of pupils are working close to their potential as predicted by their attainment on entry and the more able are stretched in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- In writing, the teaching uses too narrow a range of methods, does not always distinguish between the different learning needs of the more and less able pupils and it relies too heavily on worksheets and exercises.

Commentary

37. The vast majority of the pupils are making expected progress or better and working close to their potential for learning in reading; achievement in this aspect is good. Most of them work to their potential in writing but there are a few exceptions, mainly among the more able and less able groups; achievement here is satisfactory overall. Almost all pupils enter the school with potential to attain or exceed the nationally expected level for their age. In the main, they keep up with expectations as they get older and attain the National Curriculum level appropriate for their ability. About a third do better than this in reading by Year 6 and attain a level higher than that predicted by their attainment on entry. The more able pupils are challenged by the teaching in reading. The more able and the less able pupils are less well provided for in writing and some of them could do better in this aspect.
38. Speaking and listening skills are high. Almost all pupils speak as well or better than is expected for their respective ages, with a large minority of pupils being very articulate. They listen intently, comprehend the main points of discussion, and explain themselves well when answering questions. Only a small proportion of pupils have difficulty with verbal communication and these pupils generally have special educational needs.
39. In reading, almost all of the pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level by the end of the school year with two-thirds of them likely to exceed it. This is very good. All of the pupils are independent readers. Many of them tackle books of an adult level of difficulty. Good priority has been given to raising standards in reading and this action has been very successful. The school has been involved for several years in an early reading research project supported by the local authority. This has led to training and the development of effective methods for teaching phonic and word level skills in Years 1 and 2. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading. The attainment of these pupils on entry was closer to average overall and their achievement in reading is good.

40. In writing, a large majority of the pupils attain the expected standards for their age though only about one in five exceeds expectations. This is a smaller proportion than is found in reading or mathematics and it reflects narrowness in the teaching methods used. The methods vary between classes and do not always match the work to the specific needs of pupils with different levels of ability, particularly the more able, and the less able. In Year 6, some of the more able pupils use a wide vocabulary and express themselves thoughtfully but are not as accurate in grammar, punctuation and spelling as they need to be to attain the higher levels. This is also the case in Year 2, where several of the more able and the slightly less able pupils produce work that is less accurate grammatically and shorter than their potential indicates they are capable of producing. The headteacher and subject manager are aware of these shortcomings and acting to remedy them.

41. The teaching is good overall. All of it is satisfactory or better and the large majority is good or better. The most consistently good teaching is in Years 4, 5 and 6 and here there is good involvement of the pupils. In most lessons, the organisation of learning is effective, pupils are well motivated and actively engaged, and practical work is completed within the time available. In Years 4, 5 and 6, the teachers' subject knowledge is extensive and their expectations of the pupils are often very high. Subject leadership is good though not enough opportunities are found to promote consistently effective methods of teaching writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. Planned use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory and typical of most schools. Opportunities for writing in other subjects occur regularly though these are not always focused on developing specific writing skills. For example, not enough is done to develop knowledge of biographical writing through writing in history, or knowledge of persuasive and promotional writing through, for instance, geographical and travel writing. Good use is made in information and communication technology, both for research reading and for word processing when creating presentations.

MATHEMATICS

Provision is satisfactory. Standards are above average overall. Achievement is satisfactory; pupils generally make the nationally expected amount of progress. Teaching and learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- A few pupils do not do as well as they could.
- Assessment and monitoring procedures lack rigour.
- Mental mathematics is well taught.

Commentary

43. Standards are above average in Year 6 and average in Year 2. This reflects the mix of abilities in the particular year groups, as attainment on entry varies. Achievement is satisfactory overall and the large majority of pupils work close to their potential. In a few cases, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and lower attaining pupils are not sufficiently supported. This happens when a narrower range of teaching strategies does not sufficiently meet the needs of all pupils. In some classes an over-reliance on commercial sheets, which are pitched at the average child, causes this mismatch to occur.
44. Teaching is generally good. Learning is particularly good in Years 4 and 6. Mental mathematics is challenging, well paced, and gets lessons off to a productive start. Introductions are clear and the learning focus is well explained, often using the interactive whiteboard to present information in an exciting way. Tasks are usually well matched to pupils' abilities, and varied and interesting. In the best lessons teachers give pupils time to think and expect them to explain how they arrived at solutions. For example, in Year 4, pupils had to think of a better way of presenting information derived from a tally chart and to justify their choices. Pupils respond very well to the stimulating teaching, and their attitudes to learning are very good. They work with concentration and apply themselves wholeheartedly to their tasks.
45. Some analysis of test results and other data goes on, and some monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by the coordinator. Recent initiatives to promote mental mathematics and to challenge the most able pupils have been successful. In general there is too much variation in approaches to marking and presentation of work, and analysis lacks the rigour to identify particular individuals who are underachieving. Results are better than they were at the time of the last inspection, despite a recent fall in Year 2, and improvement is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Links with science are satisfactory and appropriate use is made of mathematical skills during scientific experiments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall.
- Effective use is made of specialist teaching to support learning in Year 6.
- Pupils show interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Insufficient emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to record findings using technical language.

Commentary

46. Achievement is satisfactory and pupils are mostly working close to their potential as predicted by their attainment on entry. Standards are above average in Year 6, where more pupils are set to exceed the national expectations than in other schools, and average in Year 2. In the national tests and assessments in 2004, results in Year 2 were above the national average and comparable to those in similar schools. However, the number of pupils exceeding national expectations was smaller than in other schools. Results in Year 6 were above the national average in 2004 but not as good as those in similar schools. In this age group, the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was better than the majority of other schools. Performance in Year 6 overall showed satisfactory educational value added compared to their attainment when in Year 2.
47. Teaching is good with some very good features. In a good lesson in Year 1, the teaching effectively enabled the pupils to develop the idea that light comes from a variety of sources, and that it can be natural as well as man made. In this lesson, literacy and religious education were used well to support learning as the use of light was related to different festivals that occur throughout the year. Teaching in Year 2 is satisfactory, but the marking of work does not tell pupils what they can do to improve.
48. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is good with some very good features. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils were planning an investigation to separate solids from liquids. The very good teaching was characterised by the very brisk pace of the lesson and the constant challenge it posed for the pupils. The pupils were much focused and all pupils made very good gains in their learning. Pupils in Year 6 benefit from some lessons with a specialist teacher from the local secondary school. This initiative is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. In classes where pupils are encouraged to plan their own investigations on a regular basis, they are developing a scientific approach to problem solving. In these classes, pupils can articulate clearly what constitutes a fair test and why this is so important for the conclusions they draw.
49. The pupils' work in Years 3 to 6 shows that it is effectively linked to their earlier experiences in the subject. Links with information and communication technology and mathematics are well developed. There are, however, occasions where opportunities to develop the use of English in the subject are missed. Occasionally, worksheets are used when pupils would benefit from illustrating their own experiments and recording their findings using technical language independently. No targets are set for pupils in the subject and the marking of work is inconsistent. Some particularly good marking was seen in Year 5. Not enough analysis of the results in national tests and assessments occurs to identify areas for improvement and to help a greater number of

pupils attaining higher levels in tests and assessments. In all year groups, pupils show a real interest in and enthusiasm for the subject.

50. The subject manager is newly appointed. She has already identified the need to increase further the opportunities for pupils to undertake their own investigations and for pupils to record their work using technical language. A need to analyse test results and use the information to improve provision has also been identified. Subject assessment is satisfactory but could be developed more thoroughly to set individual targets for pupils and track progress more accurately.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is good. Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards are well above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching is effective. Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are very good and well used.
- Teaching is good and it has some very good features.

Commentary

51. Achievement is good. Almost all of the pupils are working hard and making good progress. Standards are well above average and rising throughout the school due to effective development of the subject. The pupils in Year 6 have very good general knowledge of computer technology and particularly good skills in word processing and in presenting information through combinations of words, images, and sound. They are enthusiastic about their work and show considerable independence and initiative.
52. The teaching is good with some very good features. All teachers are using the newly installed interactive whiteboards effectively for teaching in a range of other subjects as well as specifically for information and communication technology. There are some inconsistencies between teachers that reflect variations in subject knowledge and expertise but these are easily remediable and the overall picture is very healthy. Where teaching is at its best, it is inspirational and leads to all pupils working hard and learning very quickly. In a Year 1 lesson, the pupils competently used a suitable publishing program that enabled them to present ideas in text and picture format. They showed appropriate knowledge of the keyboard and good knowledge of the program, quickly acquired since joining their present class.
53. Subject leadership is generally good. The subject manager is fully competent in using computer technology and leads well by example. Management procedures, however, are underdeveloped, partly reflecting limited time for management activity during the working day. Resources are very good. All classrooms have an interactive white board and data projector. The school has a computer suite as well as computers and laptops.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is good. The technology supports teaching in most lessons and subjects.

HUMANITIES

55. It was not possible to make a judgement on provision for **geography** as the subject was not an inspection focus and no lessons were seen. An examination of pupils' work and displays around the school indicate that all aspects of the subject are covered. In a discussion with Year 6 pupils, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and an awareness of the skills required in the subject. They were particularly appreciative of trips they have made which, they felt, had helped them to understand the subject more.
56. It was not possible to make a judgement on provision for **history**. Only two lessons were observed; in both, the teaching was good. The small amount of evidence indicates that standards at Year 2 and at Year 6 are above average but the evidence is insufficient for this overall judgement to be secure. An examination of pupil's books and displays around the school shows good coverage of the subject and the subject is well supported by the use of English and information and communication technology. Visits to museums, for example, to Colchester when studying Romans, support pupils' learning and contribute well to their knowledge and understanding. A discussion with Year 6 pupils revealed real interest in the subject; they were particularly enthusiastic about their visit to Kentwell when studying the Tudors.

Religious education

Provision is good. Teaching and learning are good leading to good achievement. Standards are above those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Leadership and management are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the coordinator has led to rapid improvement.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun.

Commentary

57. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with standards that are now above average, and improvements in the quality of teaching, achievement and especially in leadership. The coordinator has expertise and great enthusiasm. The school piloted the new locally agreed syllabus and managed the change very well. Teachers' subject knowledge improved. Training included visits by staff to places of religious worship including a Hindu Temple and St Paul's Cathedral. Regular monitoring takes place of teaching, and helpful written and oral feedback is given.
58. Teachers' increased confidence is revealed in the good quality of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Lessons are stimulating and exciting, with well planned activities tailored to the varying needs of pupils. Resources are very well organised to enrich learning, with a wealth of books and artefacts on the major topics. In one lesson, for example, Year 1 pupils heard the story of Sita and Rama told using a big book, lit divas and designed their own repeating rangoli patterns based on examples shown to them. The teacher's careful instructions and high expectations resulted in work of high quality.

59. Because lessons are well taught pupils enjoy their work and have very good attitudes to learning. This results in better than normal achievement and standards that are above average. Effective use is made of visits and visitors, including a course in Bible Explorers, which takes Year 6 pupils through the stories of the Old Testament in a vibrant and memorable way. Throughout the school striking and attractive displays celebrate different faiths.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

60. Subjects in this curricular area were not a focus of the inspection. They were sampled but no overall judgements are made about achievement, standards, teaching, or learning. The small amount of evidence in **art and design** points to good standards overall and satisfactory achievement but there is not enough evidence for this to be a secure conclusion. Much of the work on display and in the sketchbooks shows confidence, broad knowledge of techniques and media, and good drawing and painting skills. One lesson was seen in **physical education**. This was a dance lesson in Year 6. It was of good quality and all pupils made worthwhile gains in knowledge and skill. The pupils were enthusiastic and sustained their enjoyment throughout the lesson.
61. No **music** was seen. Singing in assembly and in the Christmas production is clear, tuneful and with good diction. Pupils learn brass and woodwind instruments and the piano. They have opportunities to perform these in assembly. There is a school choir and some specialist teaching with colleagues taking one another's classes. Around the school there are some attractive displays celebrating Christmas carols.
62. Only one lesson in **design and technology** was seen. Interesting work of a good quality was observed in a Year 6 lesson, with the appropriate use of tools and the teaching of skills. In Year 5 there is a good display, including photographs, of bread making. Year 2 pupils have designed cars and written evaluations of their designs. In Year 4 pupils have designed and made torches.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

63. Personal, social and health education is a strength of the school, with a caring ethos and very good relationships. Provision is very good. The rewards system boosts self-esteem, and every classroom has a display-board devoted to pupils' achievements, including certificates given for lunchtime behaviour. Pupils are articulate and confident, and cooperate very well. They use circle time to talk about their feelings and to share ideas. Pupils' views are treated with respect. These occasions are well managed by teachers, who are sensitive to pupils' needs. A range of activities is employed, including games, mimes and discussion. Pupils enjoy the sessions, which contribute well to their social and moral development, especially in the area of resolving difficulties and tolerating differences. All statutory requirements are met. Through assemblies and school productions pupils are able to demonstrate their achievements and perform for their peers. This boosts confidence. The school council enables pupils' views on matters of concern to them to be raised and addressed, and helps to prepare them for citizenship.

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

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