

INSPECTION REPORT

MILLDENE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tiptree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114760

Headteacher: Ms A Crawford

Lead inspector: Mrs S Vale

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th March 2005

Inspection number: 267325

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 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll; 173

School address: Barbrook Lane
Tiptree
Colchester

Postcode: CO5 0EF

Telephone number: (01621) 816 490
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Appropriate authority: Local Education Authority
Name of chair of Mrs E Metcalf
governors:

Date of previous 18th January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Milldene Primary School is one of four schools serving the large village of Tiptree in the north east of Essex. It provides education for pupils between the ages of four and 11. Pupils are drawn largely from the village, with a few travelling in from the surrounding area. Housing is a mix of privately owned and council properties. Since the previous inspection a new housing estate has been built close to the school and this has meant that numbers at the school have increased. There are currently 173 pupils on roll, of whom 15 attend part-time, mornings only in Reception. The school is made up of six classes, two of which are mixed-age classes; one Year 4/5 and the other Year 5/6. There are 18 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, and one pupil has a statement of special educational need. This is below the national average. Some seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is just above the national average at three per cent. The standard of attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. The school became a 'Healthy School' in 2000 and received the 'Activemark' in 2003 and 'Investors in People' in 2004. It is involved with the local community who use it for a variety of community uses. It is currently running a family learning programme on 'helping your child with maths.'

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22476	Mrs S Vale	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology Music
9519	Mrs S Pritchard	Lay inspector	
22704	Mr G Williams	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography Physical education Special educational needs
5565	Mrs B Thakur	Team inspector	Mathematics Science History Religious education English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Milldene Primary School gives an acceptable standard of education but it is not as effective as it should be and has serious weaknesses. This is because of a lack of clear vision and drive in the leadership of the school, resulting in an air of complacency and underachievement over a considerable period of time. Teaching and learning, although satisfactory, lack challenge and therefore pupils do not achieve as much as they are capable of in Years 3 to 6. Although costs per pupil are low, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

The schools' main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has created a caring community in which all individuals are valued.
- The strategic vision for the school is unsatisfactory and there has been insufficient rigour in the evaluation and performance of the school as a whole. (This has been in part due to an unfortunate series of problems, including serious illness of the headteacher and recruitment difficulties).
- Lack of challenge in some of the teaching has resulted in underachievement in the core subjects, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- While assessment and performance data is routinely gathered, results are not constructively used to provide targets for subsequent learning.
- There is a lack of rigour and consistency in subjects co-ordinators' monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement.
- Enrichment of the curriculum through extra-curricular activities is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils are cared for and looked after well.
- There are good links with other schools.

There has not been enough improvement since the previous inspection in January 1999. Whilst some progress has been made in addressing key issues, standards and achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6, have not risen sufficiently. Assessment procedures are now in place but progress has been slow and little is done with the analysis to improve standards and achievement. Teaching and learning, although satisfactory overall, have declined owing to a lack of challenge and pace, and there are not as many good lessons now seen. Although schemes of work are now in place, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching. There has been improvement in the development of information and communication technology and statutory requirements are now met. There has not been enough improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. Because of serious illness, absence from school and recruitment problems, the headteacher until very recently has not been able to develop a strategic vision for the school or to be rigorous enough in its evaluation and development. There have been a number of very recent strategies instigated in order to improve all aspects of the school but these have not had time yet to impact on standards and achievement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E - very low.*

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 3-6. It is satisfactory in Reception and children receive a good start to their education. It is satisfactory in Years 1-2. Test results in 2004 for pupils in Year 2 show that standards are above average in reading, well above average in writing and average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards for Year 2 are average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. In Year 6, 2004 test results show that standards have declined over time and they are well below average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools they remain well below average in English and are in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally in mathematics, and science. Current standards by Year 2 are in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by Year 6 remain below national averages in English, mathematics, science. Standards in information and communication technology have improved and are in line with national expectations by Year 2 and Year 6. In all other subjects standards are as expected. Pupils with special educational needs and the few who have English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. Pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, are not doing well enough in relation to their capabilities.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils from Reception to Year 6 have good attitudes to school and their behaviour overall is good both in lessons and at other times during the school day. The ethos in the school is a caring community, where all pupils are looked after well. Pupils are cared for well and their attitudes and personal qualities are good. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although a lack of expectation by teachers of what pupils can achieve means that pupils do not reach their potential in Years 3 to 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, are not challenged enough in their learning and therefore do not achieve high enough standards, again mainly in Years 3-6. Pupil tracking and assessment are regularly undertaken but are not consistently used to support the raising of standards or achievement. A number of strategies have very recently been started to improve pupils' attainment and achievement but it is too soon yet to see their impact. The curriculum is enriched through a good selection of extra-curricular activities.

Pupils' health, safety and welfare are good. There are satisfactory links with the community and parents. The school has recently started to make every effort to let parents know about changes and information. There are good links with other schools through the involvement in the Tiptree and Stanway consortium.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school over time have been unsatisfactory.

Absence of the headteacher through serious illness and a lack of vision and drive over a number of years has resulted in an air of complacency in the school. A number of strategies have been introduced very recently to try and improve standards and achievement, but is too soon yet to see the impact of these on achievement. Management is unsatisfactory and there has been limited monitoring by subject co-ordinators of standards and achievement in their subjects. There has been an inconsistency of approach to assessment and a number of new strategies have only recently been implemented to try and improve standards. Once again, their very recent introduction means that it is still too soon to see their impact. There are satisfactory day-to-day routines in place. Governance is unsatisfactory. Whilst the governing body is supportive of the school and fulfils statutory requirements, it is not challenging enough in holding the school to account for standards and lack of achievement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents vary considerably in their views of the school. They think that it is a caring place where their children are well looked after. Inspection findings agree with those parents who feel that their children do not achieve as much as they are capable of. Parents do not always feel well enough informed about decisions which the school makes. Pupils like their school and enjoy what it offers, but feel that they could have more of a voice in it. Inspection findings show that parents are justified in their opinions but that the school is starting to address these points through more regular newsletters and meetings for parents and through the introduction of class councils for pupils to have a say.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that leadership by the headteacher, senior management team and governors is more rigorous in moving the school forward.
- Raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science in Years 3-6.
- Improve the quality of teaching.
- Make monitoring of subjects by co-ordinators more rigorous to impact on teaching and learning, standards and achievement.
- Make more constructive use of assessment to set targets for subsequent learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **unsatisfactory overall**. Standards are average at the end of Year 2. They are below average by Year 6 in English, mathematics, science and history but as expected in most other subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children receive a good start in the Foundation Stage.
- Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is well below average. Current standards by Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science.
- Language and literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects are below average.

Commentary

1. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is as expected for their age. Children achieve satisfactorily in all areas of learning except in communication, language and literacy, where they are unlikely to reach the writing element of this early learning goal¹. Children are set to achieve the early learning goals in mathematics, personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development by the end of Reception.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.7 (16.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.9 (16.0)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.7 (17.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the last two years, results for pupils at the end of Year 2 in the national curriculum tests have improved from well below average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2002 to above average in reading, well above in writing and in line in mathematics in 2004, when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with similar schools, pupils reach average standards in reading and writing and below average standards in mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that this year standards are average overall and pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.5 (25.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	24.9 (25.5)	27.0 (26.8)
science	26.7 (28.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

¹ Early learning goals are the standards expected for children of this age.

3. The situation in Year 6 is less satisfactory, with standards reached in the 2004 standard assessment tests well below average in English, mathematics and science. This represents a dip in English from below, in 2002, to well below average in 2004, with standards in mathematics and science also remaining well below average. When compared to similar schools, standards remain well below average in English, and in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence confirms that current attainment in Years 3 to 6 is below average in English, mathematics and science.
4. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory. This has been in part due to an unfortunate series of problems, including serious illness of the headteacher, absence and recruitment difficulties. Lack of challenge in some of the teaching has also been a cause of some of the underachievement, with slow pace and low expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons, an over-emphasis on teacher talk and limited use of assessment data. Teaching is satisfactory overall but its current impact is insufficient to raise standards higher, resulting in unsatisfactory achievement in the core areas. The achievement for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is similar to that of their peers.
5. Standards in English by Year 2 are average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, listen carefully and generally respond well to questioning. They mostly speak confidently and verbalise their ideas well. They write in sentences and most pupils use basic grammar well. Their presentation is satisfactory overall. When reading in class, they do so fluently and with understanding. Standards in Year 6 are well below those expected for this age. Speaking and listening skills and reading skills are broadly in line but all aspects of writing are below, resulting in significant under-achievement overall. Progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, dip in Year 3, improve in Years 4/5 and dip again in Year 6.
6. Standards in mathematics are average in Year 2 and below in Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Pupils work confidently with numbers and practise their computation skills daily. Where achievement is unsatisfactory or worse, it is due to long introductory sessions not allowing sufficient opportunities for pupils to build upon and use previously acquired skills.
7. By Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the nature of science are below average and limited opportunities for pupils to address challenging tasks through investigation have a direct link to low achievement and standards not rising as fast as they should. Pupils develop satisfactory knowledge at Year 2 and carry out investigations on materials, recording their findings well on the computer. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are insufficiently challenged, resulting in limited skills development.
8. From an early age, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are taught basic computer skills in the computer suite, supported well by the technician. They become familiar with the keyboard, using the mouse and a good range of programs in different subjects. This secure start is built upon throughout Years 3 to 6 and pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily. Standards in all other subjects, except history are as expected in Years 1-6. From the limited lesson observations, evidence suggests that history standards are below expectations in Years 3 to 6.

9. Standards of literacy and numeracy used in other subjects are also below those normally expected. There is evidence of some planned opportunities to discuss and write in these other curriculum areas, but generally they are limited, resulting in lost opportunities to reinforce English and maths skills. The interactive whiteboards are used in most classes and when used well, prompt discussion and support other subjects, such as mathematics and geography. Planned opportunities to support mathematics skills in subjects like science are used minimally and so do not sufficiently promote cross-curricular links.
10. The quality of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs is sound overall, although pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve similarly to their peers. There is clear evidence of all staff working closely with the special needs co-ordinator, impacting positively to raise standards for all pupils with special educational needs. Pupils benefit from clear individual plans, which are monitored regularly by the special educational needs co-ordinator, supported by the special educational needs teaching assistant to ensure that the precise targets set are met and the progress of each individual child is carefully tracked. The school organisation ensures that these pupils are involved in all aspects of school life. This promotes confidence, self-esteem and positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour. The support staff are trained and committed to improving their expertise to benefit these pupils. Parents and pupils are invited to all review meetings. The school has introduced several initiatives, such as gym trail and Early Reading Research Programme to boost concentration and basic reading skills.
11. Standards for the very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language remain below expectations for their age in most subjects. They appear to be orally fluent in informal contexts but have difficulty with coping with the more complex language demands in the different subjects. Achievement is similar to their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils like coming to school and have very good records of attendance and punctuality. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Overall, satisfactory provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to work and learn but teaching does not always capitalise on these positive attitudes to help pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their well-above-average attendance rate.
- Pupils lose the incentive to work harder in lessons when the teaching lacks pace and rigour, and behaviour sometimes suffers.
- Measures to eliminate bullying in school are effective.

Commentary

12. Despite the significant changes in staff, all adults remain consistent in their approach to promoting the good standard of behaviour seen throughout the school. There have been no exclusions. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They work and play together harmoniously, and most parents would agree that this is so.

13. Children in the Reception class behave well and are keen to participate in the well-structured learning opportunities provided. They are polite and kind to one another. They concentrate for good lengths of time on a chosen activity and tidy up efficiently. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are helpful and friendly. Behaviour in lessons is good overall but influenced by the quality of teaching. Where teaching is good and the work well matched to the pupils' abilities, pupils behave consistently well. When teaching lacks pace and the pupils have to sit through over-long introductions and explanations, they become restless and their behaviour and motivation to work hard and achieve their best suffer as a result. Pupils with English as an additional language respond well to the additional support that is available and relate well to those who support them. They tend to remain quiet during the whole-class discussions. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work. They behave well at all times and focus on their individual tasks. As a result they are proud of their achievements.
14. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and conduct themselves sensibly during breaks from lessons. They make good use of the playground areas and equipment to run, climb, jump and practice their ball skills. They are on their best behaviour in assemblies, respecting the sense of occasion these bring to the day. Staff keep a running record of any behaviour problems during the day, which the headteacher then checks for evidence of bullying, harassment or racist incidents. This good practice helps eliminate such behaviour in school. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
15. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and social justice. At their own initiative, they find ways of helping people worse off than themselves. They lean very much towards 'doing the right thing', a quality instilled by the parents who support and encourage their children to abide by the rules, notably so with regard to their attendance and behaviour. However, many of the older pupils, in particular, feel that the school presently does not take account of their views. The long-awaited school council is still not up and running which means pupils still have no formal structure where they can share their opinions and aspirations for the future of the school. The first class council meeting in Year 4/5 was held during the inspection and was welcomed by the pupils.
16. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. In their class groups they learn about the influence faith has on the way people choose to live their lives. Good quality displays help pupils to recognise some of the distinctive architecture, costumes and traditions found in other countries and cultures. They also provide evidence of pupils developing a keen sense of spiritual awareness. After listening to music from China, pupils in Reception illustrated their thoughts and feelings on what they had heard... 'I thought of monster's feet'. 'The music made me feel scared, so I painted Red Riding Hood because she was scared'. These examples show pupils with a high degree of emotional involvement in their learning, but this is not a strong feature of all lessons. Pupils' spiritual development overall is satisfactory.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.7
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

17. Attendance levels are very good and well above the national average. Pupils arrive in very good time and lessons start promptly. Parents know that regular attendance and good timekeeping play a very important role in helping their children adopt mature and responsible attitudes. Consequently, when pupils are absent from school, it is almost always for justifiable reasons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an acceptable standard of education, but it is not as effective as it should be and has serious weaknesses. The teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but a lack of pace in lessons and a lack of challenge mean that there is underachievement in Years 3 to 6. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is good care and support for pupils and a satisfactory partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Assessment and performance data are routinely gathered but results are not constructively used to provide targets for subsequent learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low and the quality of teaching has declined since the last inspection.
- There is a lack of pace and challenge in pupils' learning in many lessons, resulting in underachievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Too much talk by teachers inhibits pupils' progress and does not give them enough opportunities to learn and try out tasks for themselves.
- Teachers insist on good standards of behaviour and pupils' behaviour is managed well in lessons.
- Assessment and performance data is routinely gathered but results are not constructively used to evaluate where there are gaps in pupil learning and what needs to be taught next.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (37%)	21 (60%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

18. There has been a decline in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Although satisfactory overall, there are fewer good and very good lessons. Approximately a third of lessons, predominantly in Year 4/5 and Reception, are taught well.

19. Children in Reception overall receive good teaching that helps them learn at a good rate. Lessons are imaginatively planned, and encourage children to want to learn. There is a good pace to lessons and teachers in Reception have higher expectations of what children can achieve than in the rest of the school.
20. Teachers in Years 1-6 do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. In many lessons, although teaching is satisfactory, teachers often underestimate the abilities of their pupils. There is a lack of challenge, and although the curriculum is covered well, teachers are not consistent in aiming for the best from their pupils at all times. Time is not always used effectively and a number of lessons have a slow pace to them. On several occasions teachers spend too much time talking at the start of lessons and not enough time is given to pupils' learning, and finding things out for themselves. This inhibits pupils' progress and results and does not allow them to achieve as well as they are capable. A study of work and results over the last few years shows that there is underachievement in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' learning has also been disjointed over time through frequent change of teachers in some classes owing to recruitment problems.
21. Teachers are increasingly using cross-curricular approaches to make useful links between subjects. This is making learning more relevant for the pupils but for some pupils this is at the expense of gaining more in-depth knowledge in a subject. Older pupils are not gaining knowledge and understanding related to a subject sufficiently in depth, nor acquiring relevant skills progressively. Higher-ability pupils are at a considerable disadvantage in this respect, particularly in Year 5/6, and this is leading to underachievement for these pupils also.
22. Pupils are managed well in class and, as a result, are able to concentrate well and, despite having to listen for a long time, in some lessons they show good attitudes and behaviour. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils.
23. The school has a reasonable number of effective support assistants. They are used well to support both individual pupils and specific groups. In class they give useful support, helping with managing behaviour and keeping pupils focused on their learning. They are also helping pupils with special educational needs to be included in lessons, as they know their specific needs well and help them in their learning. Support staff work very well in providing 'Gym trail' first thing in the morning. These group sessions take place in the hall and are proving useful in raising pupils' concentration and physical ability.
24. Pupils from Reception to Year 2 follow a programme ERR (effective reading research) to learn spellings through a range of visual, auditory and kinesthetic approaches. Overall, this is well taught and helps pupils' recognition, understanding and memory for letters and words.
25. Teachers are particularly aware of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and as a result these pupils make satisfactory progress. Their individual education plans match the work effectively to their needs and teachers make helpful notes on their progress; however, their achievement is similar to that of their peers.
26. Support in smaller groups by teachers and assistants in-class is useful in helping to access and make more sense of the day-to-day activities. On an informal basis, support that is offered helps to meet pupils' individual needs and raise pupils'

confidence and self-esteem. Ongoing assessment, however, lacks rigour and resulting information is not used effectively to plan and adjust the next stage of pupils' work. Pupils' progress in acquiring English is not tracked on a regular basis to ensure that pupils with English as an additional language work to capacity in all subjects and reach their full potential.

27. Assessment was a key issue at the time of the last inspection. Procedures are now in place, but there has been slow progress and information gained from assessments is not fully utilised. Little is done with the analysis to improve standards and achievement. There are regular reviews of performance data using 'pupil tracker' but the information found is not fully acted upon in analysing different groups' achievement or lack of achievement, and so is not being used successfully enough to move the school on. In a recent review of the system for target setting by teachers, they felt that it was too unwieldy and have very recently decided to change the methods used for setting targets for pupils. The new system is still not consistently or thoroughly in place and therefore it is not possible to comment yet on its effectiveness.
28. Some assessment which takes place is informal and may take the form of questions in class or using individual whiteboards for pupils to record answers before showing them to their teacher. Information gathered is not used sufficiently well to set targets for individual pupils or to plan future work designed to move pupils on to the next level. Targets seen (for example, in Year 2 in mathematics) are what the pupils will be covering over the year, and do not indicate how individual pupils can improve their own learning and performance.
29. Over time since the last inspection a number of different systems have been trialed and altered and there have been a number of changes instigated and then abandoned because teachers do not feel that they work well enough. Past systems have not been used consistently over a period of time for proper evaluation to take place so that the learning and achievement of pupils has not been moved forward fast enough.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum provided in the school is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Reception class. The extra-curricular activities offered to pupils are good and help to enrich the curriculum and make it more relevant. The accommodation, quality and range of learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for the youngest children in the school is good but the oldest pupils are not served equally well.
- The curriculum balance is not assured through monitoring by subject co-ordinators, and time is not used productively to make learning effective.
- Pupils enjoy and parents appreciate the good range of extra-curricular activities that is offered; after-school activities are well attended and supported by staff and parents.
- Useful links are established with other schools and this has a positive effect on promoting physical education and sports.

Commentary

30. The school provides a broad curriculum that is enriched further through a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, the school does not evaluate how effectively

teachers are using their time in lessons, or whether the non-core subjects are given sufficient amounts of time and coverage. Religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, but the learning outcomes are variable for pupils in different classes. Curriculum policies and schemes of work have recently been revised for most subjects, and there are agreed medium- and short-term teaching plans. Monitoring by the subject leaders, however, is not yet consistently established or sufficiently rigorous to ensure that plans are carried through. Curriculum coverage is often patchy in the non-core subjects.

31. There have been some good developments in the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum since the last inspection. The school now fully meets the statutory requirements for ICT. The cross-curricular use of ICT hardware, such as the interactive whiteboard, the digital camera and the video, is useful in supporting pupils' learning and stimulating a high level of interest amongst pupils and staff.
32. The curriculum is enriched through the good range of extra-curricular activities which includes a lunchtime club for the infants and multi-sports, football, netball, athletics and basketball for the juniors. These activities provide a good focus for developing a partnership with other schools and education centres. There are good facilities for providing swimming lessons in the school during the summer term, which the community also uses. Subjects benefit from the well-organised activities and events in the 'themed' weeks'. After-school activities, such as the 'tapestry club', help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers make good use of educational visits and visitors, to support their lessons, and the range of activities includes a well-received bi-annual residential visit.
33. The school is successfully promoting the creative arts, especially music; for example, through a dedicated music room, music week and a specialist music teacher. Instrumental lessons are arranged for pupils by using specialist teachers. Art is also given a higher profile through links with other subjects, regular 'art days' and by using an artist in residence.
34. The school is committed to equal opportunities. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. Their individual education plans are satisfactorily documented, identifying individual targets and support for pupils, so that they make sound progress. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, and areas noted where they show particular skill or talent. Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as other groups in some subjects, such as mathematics, and often this is because they are not sufficiently challenged. There is satisfactory in-class support for pupils with English as an additional language, which helps them to access adequately all that is taught in a subject. The school promotes multi-cultural education through organising multi-cultural activities and events, to develop an awareness of other cultures and beliefs. Cultural diversity is often celebrated through popular festivals in religions.
35. Satisfactory provision is made for personal, social and health education (PSHE), including sex and relationships education, drugs awareness and citizenship. PSHE is often taught through 'circle times'. There is no school council as yet but the newly introduced system of class councils is proving useful in providing practical opportunities for pupils to develop good qualities of citizenship, such as problem solving, voting and decision making. The school gives due importance to developing healthy eating habits through science and health education. The school has recently achieved the 'Active mark' Gold and 'Healthy Schools' awards.

36. There is an adequate number of teachers and a good ratio of teaching assistants. Staff are suitably qualified for their roles. The accommodation is good, although space becomes a problem when the fixed apparatus is used. For children in the Reception class there have been good improvements in the playground provision and play facilities. A useful library has been completed recently which also serves as an additional corridor space when the hall is in use. However, the school has not yet thought of using the space creatively on a regular basis, to get the maximum benefit. Good use is made of the spare classroom to provide for music and other creative work. Learning resources are adequate in most subjects. The computer suite is well equipped and is used productively by all classes. There is a trained technician assistant to manage the provision effectively and liaise with teachers.

Care, guidance and support

There are good arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils. Pupils have access to sound advice. Guidance and support based on monitoring is not so secure. Satisfactory account is only just starting to be taken of pupils' views through the introduction of class councils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are guided well in their personal conduct but not so well in ways of improving their work.
- Good attention is paid to ensuring the school premises and equipment are secure and properly maintained.
- Pupils are given good encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- Staff are particularly vigilant about welfare and child protection issues.
- Good induction procedures give children the confidence to cope with school and its routines.

Commentary

37. Parents feel their children are happy and cared for well and inspectors agree with these views. The support for pupils' personal development and relationships with others is good. Health and safety checks of the site and equipment are regular and thorough. Good progress has been made in making the school accessible to people with physical disabilities. First aid routines are well planned and organised and staff are very aware of what they must or must not do when attending to sick or injured pupils. Good liaison is maintained with health agencies and with the parents of children with specific medical needs. Healthy eating and regular exercise are part and parcel of school routines. Milk, fruit and vegetables are on offer at break-times and pupils have access to an adventure playground and a swimming pool.
38. The school has good procedures in place to deal with child protection issues. Staff are mindful of their responsibilities towards children at risk. They listen closely to what children say and are careful to report any concerns they may have at once to the designated teacher. The headteacher herself makes time to sit with pupils at break-times to listen to their news and gain their confidence in sharing it. A governor has been appointed to oversee the arrangements for child protection and there are plans to update the knowledge staff have on this through further training.

39. Having drawn no firm conclusions from the questionnaire it put together to gauge pupils' views on its work, the school hopes for better and more regular consultation with pupils when the school council is eventually up and running.
40. Good use is made of assemblies and class discussion times to reinforce the message to pupils that racial intolerance, bullying and abuse are not acceptable under any circumstances. Pupils confirm that they would not hesitate to report any instances of this kind, knowing that they would be promptly dealt with in the first instance by any adult in school.
41. The support given to pupils, based on the monitoring of their work, is mixed. Pupils are regularly encouraged to try hard but are not, at the same time, given personalised academic targets to show them what they should be aiming for. This is because teachers have not been making good use of all the indicators available to them to 'fine tune' their lessons and incorporate in them the most achievable targets for each pupil. Pupils with a statement of special educational need receive good support.
42. There are good arrangements in place to help children settle into school. A structured programme of pre-school visits, story time sessions and a gradual build-up of their days in school helps smooth the transition from home or nursery. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were keen that home visits should continue but otherwise had no concern about the way children were introduced to the school.
43. Pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and supported so that all pupils are helped to make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. The special educational needs co-ordinator uses a range of assessment procedures to do this. Targets are drawn up and individual education plans written by the co-ordinator in collaboration with the class teacher and special educational needs teaching assistant. These are subject to frequent reviews to ensure they remain appropriate. They involve parents and pupils.
44. Teachers and teaching assistants know the individual needs of pupils in class and work collaboratively to cater to their needs. There is early identification of needs on arrival, but assessment systems are not sufficiently rigorous to help increase the speed of learning English. Pupils do not have any individual plans with clear learning targets. There is a caring ethos in the school and pupils settle well and feel safe.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school overall has a satisfactory partnership with parents, although there are a number of parents who have lost faith in the leadership and management of the school, and there are satisfactory links with the local community. Links with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents appreciate the school's efforts to provide guidance on helping their children with maths.
- A significant number of parents have lost faith in the leadership and management of the school. There is a strong feeling amongst many that the school is not taking sufficient account of their views and needs.
- Parents' involvement in the decision-making processes in school is underdeveloped.
- The contribution made to the school by the parent teacher association is very good.
- Parents are valued for the support they give in lessons and other activities.

Commentary

45. Parents firmly support the principle that responsibility for children's education is a shared commitment between home and school. The support they give to the attendance and behaviour policy, and their desire for clearer information on the latter, bear testimony to this. Parents appreciate the trouble taken by the school to keep them up to date on curriculum developments. They valued the sessions the school ran on how mathematics is taught nowadays. Despite this, there is a strong feeling amongst many that the school is not taking sufficient account of their views and needs. Parents want the school to consult and communicate with them more, particularly about their children's progress. The pre-inspection meeting and survey also revealed varying degrees of concern amongst parents about the way the school is led and managed. Inspectors agree that the school does not take enough account of parents' views to judge whether it is meeting its aims, or of involving them as fully as possible in their children's learning.
46. Reports to parents on pupils' achievements include targets that sometimes do not match what is said elsewhere in the report. This is because teachers have only just embarked on the process of setting realistic and challenging targets for pupils' attainment and progress. It is not always easy for parents to gauge from the reports the achievement their children have made over time or whether it is good enough, given the child's age and capabilities. The prospectus and governors report contain most of the information parents must, by law, receive from the school, with the exception of an update on the progress made since the school was last inspected. Newsletters give good information on day-to-day events but rarely champion the views of parents or pupils in a way that would persuade them that their opinions are welcomed and their comments are valued. This is an example of where the school misses an opportunity of tapping into valuable sources of information on the effectiveness and impact of its work.
47. There is a structured approach to children joining the school that most parents and pupils feel comfortable with. Links with the local playgroup are good and allow parents and children the chance to familiarise themselves with the school before joining the Reception class. Fundraising in school is supported very well through a range of activities that foster a real family and community spirit. The school can rely on the parents' support in classrooms, on visits and with other activities. Parents give generously of their time and energy towards helping maintain and run the school's swimming pool, a facility that is also let out to local groups. The close links with the nearby secondary school continue. Pupils are involved in sports festivals and a visiting teacher runs a French club for the older pupils. Joint staff meetings, exchange visits and shared project work with a number of other schools help pupils transfer confidently from one school setting to the next.
48. There are good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are kept fully informed of the progress of their children and invited to frequent reviews of targets set.
49. There are satisfactory links with the parents of pupils with EAL, who are made to feel welcome. They attend meetings when invited and raise concerns when they are not sure about how their children's learning is organised in the school, and how they are progressing. Homework that is sent home helps to provide a useful focus for a

discussion between parents and teachers. There are friendly and harmonious relationships with people from other communities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory. Absence of the headteacher through serious illness, recruitment difficulties and a lack of vision and drive have resulted in insufficient progress in moving the school forward. The governing body is supportive of the school and fulfils statutory requirements. Governance overall is unsatisfactory because it is not challenging enough in holding the school to account for standards and lack of achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strategic vision for the school is unsatisfactory and there has been insufficient rigour in the evaluation and performance of the school as a whole. (This has been in part due to an unfortunate series of problems, including serious illness of the headteacher and recruitment difficulties).
- There is a lack of rigour in the monitoring and evaluation of performance and a lack of confidence in tackling weaknesses.
- Governance is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of strategic direction and evaluation of the school's effectiveness.

Commentary

50. Absence of the headteacher through serious illness and a lack of vision and drive over a number of years has resulted in an air of complacency in the school which is only very recently being addressed. Since the last inspection in 1999 there has been a lack of rigour in the monitoring and evaluation of school performance and, apart from using 'pupils tracker', there has been limited school self-evaluation.
51. It is only very recently that the school has started to evaluate its own performance (with the support of the local education authority) in a more structured and focused way. A number of initiatives have just been introduced to address areas of school development, but these have not as yet been in place long enough to assess their full impact on raising attainment or achievement.
52. There is a satisfactory school improvement plan which shows the way the school intends to move forward, but this has not had time to be embedded yet or to see the impact of its planning. There are regular reviews of performance data, but the information found is not fully acted upon in analysing different groups' achievements and it is not being used successfully enough to move the school on.
53. The senior management team does not consistently or rigorously monitor teaching, learning, standards or achievement rigorously enough in lessons or through looking at work. This is also true of subject co-ordinators, many of whom are new to their roles or work part-time at the school. Whilst they are keen and interested in their subjects, as yet they are not monitoring teaching and learning, standards and achievement thoroughly enough.
54. The daily management of the school is satisfactory and allows all to go about their daily tasks smoothly. The general learning environment of the school is satisfactory and has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and behaviour and in the pastoral aspects

of pupils' education. There are satisfactory support arrangements for inducting new staff, and opportunities for professional development for all staff. This is supported well through the school's involvement in the Tiptree and Stanway consortium (a working group of local schools), which the headteacher is successfully involved in. The school has recently gained recognition by achieving 'Investors in People' status.

55. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, and understand their roles and responsibilities. There have been problems in the past in achieving a full governing body; the school now has almost a full complement of governors. Governors have recently changed the way which they organise their meetings and are now beginning to feel that they know more about what is going on in the school. They work in a supportive role but they are not challenging enough in their questioning of decisions made by the school or in questioning why standards and achievement are remaining low over time. They have not been proactive enough in helping the school to move forward at a fast enough pace.
56. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. All statutory arrangements are in place and there is a good match between pupils' statements and their individual education plans. Annual Reviews are well organised and good account is taken of parents' contributions. Although there is the start of a school council through the recent introduction of class councils, all pupils' views are not formally sought. A good feature of the leadership of special educational needs is the monitoring of pupils in class or small groups and the useful feedback, which is much appreciated by staff.
57. The headteacher oversees the provision for pupils with English as an additional language in general, but no one else has the specific responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the provision overall. Financial support is available from the LEA, when the school qualifies for this, and is used satisfactorily to buy additional time for teaching assistants to provide in-class support. Pupils' needs are identified informally when they join the school, but pupils' assessments are not recorded carefully to see how well they are progressing over a period of time. There is no written policy or longer-term plan to move forward in this area in order to improve provision.
58. The financial running costs of the school are reasonable. The school does compare itself with other schools, and has successful links through the Tiptree and Stanway consortium of schools. This allows teachers to meet colleagues and to share training with teachers in other schools. The carry-forward at just under 12 per cent is high and more than the recommended amount of between five to eight per cent. The principles of best value are unsatisfactory as the school until very recently has not been rigorous enough in monitoring its own progress and evaluation. Although costs per pupil are low and the school ensures that it gets 'best quotes' for prices, the long-term lack of achievement and low standards over a number of years mean that the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	531,077
Total expenditure	507,889
Expenditure per pupil	2,988

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	39,768
Balance carried forward to the next year	49,438

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Overall provision for children in Reception is **satisfactory**.

Children enter Reception part-time the term before they are five. This current year there are a large number of children who have a summer birthday. The largest intake therefore has been in the spring term, with 15 children attending part-time from 8.50 - 11.30 each morning and nine children attending all day. The Reception is currently staffed by two temporary part-time teachers, who started towards the end of the autumn term after the departure of a teacher who was covering a permanent member of staff on maternity leave. Staff make home visits before children start in Reception. Children also have the chance to visit school before they start so that they have a couple of 'taster' sessions. This allows them to make a smooth start to their time at school and ensures that they settle in quickly and confidently.

Children enter Reception with broadly expected levels of attainment for their age. Imaginatively planned lessons in Reception enable children to make good progress in their learning. This is particularly so in their imaginative and speaking and listening development. Since the relatively new job share took over last year, teachers do regular observations of pupils' attainment and achievement. This is then used to plan the next stage of children's learning.

The temporary staff in Reception have good knowledge of the early years curriculum. Teaching is good overall. They work well together as a team to provide a happy, safe and secure environment where learning is made fun for these young children. The guidance and support they offer for children, parents and staff are good. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Overall, in communication language and literacy, children will not meet the early learning goals in writing by the end of Reception. In numeracy, personal, social and emotional development, creative, physical and knowledge and understanding of the world, children are expected to reach the expected levels for this age.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children quickly gain in confidence as adults make them feel secure in their learning.
- Many activities are well planned to ensure that children's personal and social development is clearly encouraged.

Commentary

59. Children achieve well in this area of development in Reception. The good induction procedures also ensure that children settle quickly into daily routines. They quickly gain in confidence in exploring the variety of activities set out for them and the majority happily settle in to the general routines of the day. In Reception, overall good quality

teaching, along with imaginative ideas, ensure that children display good levels of concentration and involvement in their activities. This is helped by good adult intervention, helping children to explore and develop in confidence in their learning. Children are likely to reach the early learning goals in this area of the curriculum.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-organised and imaginative activities support children's language development.
- All staff working in the Foundation Stage take every opportunity to encourage children to speak and to develop their vocabulary and their language skills.
- Children are unlikely to meet the writing part of this early learning goal.

Commentary

60. Staff provide good opportunities for children to develop their spoken language and this helps them to achieve well. Opportunities to develop children's reading are integrated well into daily routines. There is a lot of emphasis on talk through play and practical activities. In the sessions observed, teaching was good. Staff develop children's spoken language by often repeating what they have said. They talk about what they are doing and encourage children to do the same. For example, when playing in the pirate ship named after the class, the 'Jolly Ruby', adults help develop children's vocabulary related to the pirate theme well. This is also continued when they are playing outside; again, good adult intervention means that children are encouraged to develop their imaginative skills, pretending that the grass is the sea and the playhouse a pirate boat.
61. Skilled planning of activities fires children's imagination and they are very excited at digging for treasure in the sand pit and building treasure boxes in their creative activities. This has a positive impact on developing their linguistic skills. By the time they leave Reception the majority of children can recognise and write their own names. Children are regularly listened to read. They are clearly taught how to use and respect books and they are already aware that words convey meaning. There are good opportunities for children to learn how to write and they are encouraged from a very early age to make marks on paper, and on the blackboard with chalks outside. Despite this encouragement, their progress in writing is more limited and they are unlikely to meet the early learning goals in this area of the curriculum.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a good variety of opportunities to count and sort numbers.
- Practical activities support children's learning and recognition of different shapes and continuing patterns.

Commentary

62. Children are provided with a range of activities to support their learning of numbers and they achieve satisfactorily in this area. They are encouraged to count whenever the opportunity arises. There is good teaching of positional mathematical language and alongside well organised practical activities this ensures that children progress and achieve well in this area of learning. Children make real progress in their understanding of right and left, through the use of grids and games. Practical activities support children's learning in shape and space and they achieve well in this area of the curriculum.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative activities are planned to enhance children's learning of this area of the curriculum.
- Use of the ICT suite is only available for those pupils who attend full-time.

Commentary

63. Imaginative activities and good teaching succeed in helping children in Reception to learn about the world around them and to achieve well and to meet the early learning goals in this area of the curriculum. For example, adult-directed activities involving playing with sand and water and working with different mediums such as play dough and paint, enhance pupils' understanding of what these different textures feel like. The children who attend school all day are fortunate to have the opportunity to work on programmes in information and communication technology in the suite. For example, they can click and move objects across the screen, building up their own imaginative island. This opportunity is unfortunately not available to the majority of children who are only attending part-time.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are satisfactory opportunities for children to increase their physical development.
- Activities are matched to support other areas of learning such as moving to music.

Commentary

64. Most children are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave Reception. The teaching in this area is satisfactory. The outdoor areas are used effectively to develop children's physical skills. Children in Reception develop their fine

motor skills by putting aprons on and fastening the buttons on their clothes and decorating and icing biscuits. They are given opportunities to learn about and practise how to hold a brush and how to cut and paste materials, for example when they are making collages about items related to their work on pirates. Opportunities to develop their emergent writing and handwriting skills are good, but as yet are not always the first choice of activities by the children. Children who attend all day have the opportunity to use the hall and move, run and dance to music. They have great fun showing how to move in different ways. This opportunity is not open to the other children who attend part-time.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good planned opportunities for children to develop creative skills.

Commentary

65. Reception children enjoy pretending, and good resources support their learning. Children have the opportunity to make models, paint and draw, make music and enjoy imaginative play. Children in Reception continue the theme of pirates and have great fun making treasure chests. They also paint portraits of themselves. These experiences help children to develop their creative skills and they are likely to reach the expected levels by the end of the Reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in most classes is below expected levels and teachers' expectations are too low.
- Marking is variable and is not generally diagnostic. It does not advise pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Assessment, though collected and analysed, is not used to set future targets for learning.
- Speaking and listening are well promoted in most lessons.
- The use of ICT to promote literacy, apart from teacher use of the interactive whiteboards, is extremely limited.
- Leadership of English as an additional language is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

66. Overall standards in English are in line with those nationally in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. The 2004 National Standard and Attainment Tests in Year 2 reflected a similar picture to that currently found. The results for Year 6 in 2004 indicated results which were well below average. Pupils in Year 2, including those

with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. However, there is strong evidence of underachievement in Years 3-6. This is due to the slow pace in some lessons and low teacher expectations. Assessment systems include analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses but this information is not used to inform future planning and teaching. The curriculum is satisfactory but strategies to improve writing, for example, in other subject areas are extremely limited and are therefore not raising standards quickly enough.

67. Pupils listen well in lessons and the vast majority are willing to respond verbally during introductory sessions. This is because most teachers use questioning well to draw out ideas and information. Pupils with limited vocabulary are carefully helped to think back to previous learning and to put their thoughts into words. Speaking overall is well promoted, often through good opportunities for pupils to talk with their partners, although teachers make only limited use of drama. When it is used, as was seen in an Act of Collective Worship, it is used well and clearly displays the potential of these pupils.
68. In Year 2, pupils achieve well in their reading because of the provision made for guided reading. Most pupils develop strategies for reading unfamiliar words and use context of the writing to guess meaning. More able pupils use sight vocabulary and if confronted with a new word, use the phonic approach to work out what it says. Pupils generally show an understanding of books and predict sensibly. The school library is underused; this limits pupils' reference skills development. The reading in Year 6 reflects a similar picture, with reading at satisfactory levels, but pupils' also lack library skills because of their limited visits.
69. Writing in Year 2 is in line with national averages. However, the standards of writing in Year 6 are much lower expected Writing has shown a definite decline in English since 2002, compared with both national standards and those of similar schools. There is a definite lack of opportunities to record work in subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education to support overall levels of writing. Standards in these areas fall below those normally expected for pupils of this age and ability.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers' questioning skills encourage pupils to listen well and be confident in their responses. Explanations are mostly clear and help pupils know what they need to do when they approach their tasks. However, in many lessons, the level of teacher talk is too great. Teachers also have poor expectations and proceed at too slow a pace, which severely limits the opportunity for pupils to address their tasks and learn. In addition, marking of pupils' work is not sufficiently consistent to help pupils know what they need to do to improve, but some examples were observed where useful feedback was followed up in subsequent work to ensure targets were achieved. Most teachers use the interactive whiteboards well, which supports learning, but teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to enhance writing generally and improve, for example, pupils' spelling.
71. The subject has not been managed well until very recently. The co-ordinator acknowledges that monitoring and evaluating procedures are insufficiently rigorous and do not efficiently identify weaknesses so that effective strategies are introduced to raise standards. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Language and Literacy across the curriculum

72. There is unsatisfactory promotion of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects. In geography, history and religious education, there is very limited evidence of literacy being used across the curriculum to promote writing skills. Promotion of speaking and listening skills in discussion and reading skills when using research skills to retrieve information are being developed satisfactorily.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Numeracy standards are below average for pupils in Years 3-6. When compared to similar schools, standards for Year 6 are in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally.
- New initiatives are introduced, but not given sufficient time to see through their impact on progress that is made.
- Homework is not used consistently by all teachers to consolidate and improve pupils' skills.
- Pupils' use of mathematical language and their recording skills are underdeveloped.
- Computer-based systems of assessment are used to good effect to support pupils' assessments, although the resulting information is not used effectively by all teachers to plan the next stage of work.

Commentary

73. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are average in all aspects of mathematics. In Year 6 they are below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but there is unsatisfactory achievement in Years 3-6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily as a result of the encouragement and support they are given. Samples of work show that more able pupils tend to underachieve as the work assigned lacks challenge at the higher levels. Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to work positive. There is a higher degree of motivation when pupils use the interactive whiteboard, and there is enough challenge in the activities. Overall, there is unsatisfactory improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection, as standards have not risen sufficiently. Pupils have been underachieving for quite some time and there is a downward trend in results achieved. The issues remain the same as at the time of the last inspection.
74. Pupils in Year 2 show a sound understanding of the place value of numbers with two digits, and can count numbers backwards and forwards in steps of 5s and 10s. They understand the value of data handling in a survey, for example, of their favourite party food. They collect data in a tally chart and later construct and interpret data in a block graph, although most needed a great degree of the teacher's support. Only a few pupils can work independently.
75. Pupils in Year 4/5 solve simple problems involving real-life situations using money, and they successfully select which number operations are necessary to solve the problems. Pupils in Year 5/6 can interpret a bar line graph. Pupils' work samples show that more able pupils understand 10ths, 100ths and 1000ths – decimal points to three places. They have a greater knowledge of the place value in larger numbers and can divide or multiply numbers by 10 or 100. There are limited examples of using and applying the four rules of mathematics in more complex problem solving.

76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Strengths in the good lessons that were seen include: detailed planning based on the National Numeracy Strategy; a good pace and rigour in activities; differentiated activities to meet individual needs; and above all, interesting activities which were linked to real-life situations. Although no unsatisfactory teaching was seen, teaching overall lacked pace and rigour. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do were not high enough, and pupils were given less challenging tasks than they were capable of. At times, the management of time was not good enough, and activities were too teacher-led, with pupils remaining too long in a passive role. Teaching assistants provide good quality support to those who need it most, liaising well with the teachers.
77. Whole-school targets that were set in the last three years for pupils in Year 6 have not been met. This indicates that the school predictions based on teacher assessment are often more optimistic than what the results have indicated in the past. Assessment is still unsatisfactory in mathematics, despite a variety of strategies which have been tried to address this. The regular use of optional tests and the analysis of pupils' responses are proving useful in identifying areas in which more focus is necessary. 'Key objectives' are used well to support assessment, and to serve as year group targets. Target setting at an individual level, however, is not effective. There is an inconsistent approach to this throughout the school and a new system is just being started.
78. There have been a number of changes in the way mathematics has been organised in the school. Often, new initiatives are introduced, but not given sufficient time to see through their impact on progress that is made. For example, 'broad banding' in Years 4 - 6 was introduced for a short time to boost standards, and to provide additional support for the under-achieving pupils; it has been stopped recently. The school self-evaluation indicates that pupils need to be secure in using and applying all four rules in numeracy, to solve problems. This was a similar situation at the time of the last inspection.
79. There has been unsatisfactory leadership of the subject in the past. There have been insufficient opportunities in the past for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning, to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching across the school, and for sampling pupils' work, to review progress made. The co-ordinator who has been in place for 3 years has other responsibilities as well at senior management level. The recent monitoring of the subject across the school has been a joint effort, with support from external consultants. There are signs that planning and assessment practice is beginning to improve in the school as a result of the various initiatives that have been taken to improve the provision. The co-ordinator is more involved now in monitoring the teachers' planning and in analysing the test results. It is too early, however, to see the impact of her leadership on improving teaching and learning, and on raising standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. There are limited opportunities for using and applying mathematics in real-life situations across the curriculum; pupils' problem-solving skills are underdeveloped as a result. There are some examples of the use of mathematics in science in Years 2 and 4/5.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average by Year 6.
- Assessment and monitoring of teaching in this subject are underdeveloped and not used rigorously enough to raise standards.

Commentary

81. Standards of attainment in science are average in Year 2 but well below average in Year 6. When compared to similar schools nationally in the Year 6 2004 standard assessment tests, they were in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Year 2. Over the long term in Years 3-6, there is evidence of underachievement, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. Although the test results in science are more variable from year to year, as compared to other core subjects, there is little evidence to suggest that there will be a vast improvement in the test results in 2005. Some teachers try hard to inspire and motivate pupils, but the history of underachievement is holding back standards. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and they show good levels of enthusiasm in their group investigations. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, and achieve satisfactorily as a result of the more focused in-class support from their teachers and their teaching assistants.
82. Pupils in Year 2 have undertaken some group investigations, linked to their learning about material and their properties. In their work on forces, they made predictions and recorded their findings in a simple table.
83. In Year 5/6, pupils are becoming familiar with simple scientific processes and how different variables can be controlled in investigations, but they are not yet secure in their understanding of the scientific idea of a 'fair test'. Data handling and recording are improving but there are limited opportunities for pupils to make accurate measurements in different scientific contexts. Pupils are encouraged to record their methods of investigation in suggested ways and to make their predictions, but the conclusions are often missing or only recorded briefly, and not explained using scientific vocabulary.
84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Scientific enquiry is an area of focus in the school improvement plan, but not all teachers are fully confident in teaching all aspects of science. Investigations are generally teacher-led. In the lessons seen, skills development in recording and measuring was better in Year 2 and in Year 4/5 than in other year groups. Opportunities are often missed in teaching pupils how to write their investigations in a structured way, using scientific language. The quality and use of assessment are variable. Assessment is not used well to plan for the wide range of abilities in a class. In a mixed-age class, this presents an even bigger challenge for the teachers. Expectations, therefore, are not always high enough for the abilities of the pupils, and there is insufficient challenge for the higher-attaining pupils, which leads to boredom and wasting of time. Teachers are, however, able to use the interactive whiteboard skilfully to support teaching and learning, which helps to motivate pupils and they become fully engaged. There is satisfactory use of the computer for constructing graphs, tables, and interpreting results.

85. Management of the subject is sound but the leadership is not sufficiently strong. The co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to teach or influence teaching and learning in Years 3-6. There is an action plan for this Year to bring about improvements in the subject, but a strategic plan has not been thought through well enough. Monitoring and evaluation have not been done on a regular basis. Monitoring of teaching has only just been sampled in two classes. The policy has been reviewed recently but the schemes of work used to support this are not fully in operation. A computer-based assessment system has been introduced but there is no evaluation to suggest how it is working and, if it is successful in identifying pupils' needs, to influence the teachers' planning. More recently the test results have been analysed by the co-ordinator to look for weaknesses in pupils' responses and areas in which more input is necessary. There is insufficient improvement in the subject since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching supported well by ICT technician enables pupils to achieve well and attain at least satisfactory standards by the end of Year 6.
- The leadership and management are good and enable the school to develop and improve provision at a good pace.
- The curriculum is good in ICT and well supported by a joint school / LEA assessment programme, which provides comparative data about the school's performance in relation to other schools in the authority.
- Teachers make effective use of the good resources to support learning.
- The computer suite is proving to be a valuable asset in both improving pupils' skills and supporting other curricular areas. However, use of the ICT suite for Reception children is only available for those pupils who attend full-time.

Commentary

86. Pupils in Years 1-6 are now achieving well in this area. Pupils now attain standards in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection when standards at the end of both key stages were below national expectations.
87. Curriculum programmes of study in previous years had not been covered and there had been little opportunity for investigation, control or reinforcement of numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum. These areas of concern have now been successfully addressed and the school is making positive strides forward, indicating a significant upward trend in this area. This is due to good teaching, good support from the computer suite technician and effective use of the computer suite itself.
88. As pupils move through the school, they are given many opportunities to develop their computer skills. They work well in pairs but Years 4/5 are trialing a system where 50 per cent of the class work individually on a computer, whilst the other half research in the classroom. This is a positive move, and worked well in the short session observed when pupils were working on a photomontage. This allows assessment to be carried out more effectively and efficiently. In Year 1, pupils use the computer suite to support a science activity where pupils select appropriate words to write sentences about different properties of various materials. In Year 3, pupils demonstrate their skills in

logging on and logging off, changing passwords and entering personal security information in preparation to communicate with school friends using the 'E pals' program. In Years 4/5, pupils use digital cameras to take an aspect of the playground as a preparation to creating a photomontage.

89. By Year 6, pupils are developing their skills well and have their own portfolios to show good coverage of the curriculum in meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT and links with the other subjects. The teachers and technician are very supportive. They provide tasks which are appropriate and well matched to National Curriculum requirements and pupils' ability. The expectation is for pupils to analyse and find their own solutions to solve the problems so that pupils are learning to become self-confident, inter-supportive and competent.
90. Leadership and management are good and have resulted in moving this area forward from the unsatisfactory judgements identified in the previous inspection. There are several reasons for this. The subject has been well promoted by the co-ordinator, with the support of the headteacher and LEA. The technician not only supports the learning effectively but prepares programmes before pupils arrive, thus avoiding any time slippage. The subject leader has helped staff gain confidence, not only in the computer suite but using the digital camera and the classroom-based interactive whiteboards. The standards now being achieved are supported by effective assessment procedures using the assessment programme in conjunction with the LEA. This offers comparative information about the school's standards measured against other schools in the borough, performance of boys and girls, and effectively monitors coverage of the various strands. The curriculum in this area is good and all aspects are fully met. ICT is now beginning to be well used to support other subjects. Resources are good. This adds value and efficiency to the learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. The development of ICT across the curriculum is developing well and is currently satisfactory. Links are now being established with other subjects, such as mathematics and science. However, its use in history, geography and religious education to promote writing is under-developed.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported on below. Geography and history were sampled.

92. From the one lesson observed in **geography**, scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, indications suggest that standards are broadly in line with those normally expected both by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills of enquiry through books, pictures, maps, atlases, globes and videos. In Year 1, pupils developed through investigation the meaning and use of maps. In Year 3 they considered the Nile and its environs as cross-curricular support for history and design and technology. In Year 4/5 there has been some good work on the use of recycling, re-using and reducing in relation to its impact on the environment. Resources overall are satisfactory and geography is well supported by information and communication technology.
93. **History** was not a major inspection focus. From the two **history** lessons observed, scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils, standards in Years 1-2 are as expected.

Standards in Years 3-6 are below expectations and pupils do not achieve as well as they are capable. Opportunities are provided for pupils in Year 4/5 to use both primary and secondary sources to find out information about their topic on the Aztecs. Good teaching in this year group ensured that pupils used role-play to good effect and there were good opportunities for asking questions and holding discussions. In a weaker lesson in Year 5/6 the teacher's expectations of what pupils could achieve was too low and therefore higher-attaining pupils wasted their time and were bored, and the majority did not make any gains in the lesson. From the scrutiny of pupils' work, there is insufficient progress in developing the pupils' writing skills. There are minimal opportunities for the subject co-ordinator to monitor teaching and look at work samples, to see how well pupils are learning and progressing.

Religious education

Provision in the subject is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are broadly as expected but there are differences in the quality of teaching in different classes, resulting in differences in pupils' achievements.
- Pupils compare and look for similarities and differences in religious practices, showing a sensitivity to and respect for other religions and beliefs.
- Festivals in different religions are celebrated throughout the school.
- Assessment remains an area of focus for improvement in the subject, indicating that there has not been enough progress since the last inspection.

Commentary

94. Pupils' understanding of religions is close to that expected of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 6. They develop appropriate levels of understanding of the key concepts in religions, including Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. They manage to express their ideas well orally, but their writing skills are below expectations. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall in Years 3-6, as teachers' expectations of what they should know and understand in their year groups are not high enough. Opportunities are not carefully planned for developing pupils' writing skills, which are poor at times.
95. Pupils' achievements are better in Year 4/5 than they are in Year 5/6. Pupils in Year 4/5 explain well that Hindus worship many gods, and that each is associated with different qualities. Pupils know about the Hindu beliefs about re-incarnation and the notion of karma, and compare these with the associated Christian customs and beliefs. They compare the story of Creation in different religions, for example, the Bible story of Creation and those linked to Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils discuss similarities and differences in different practices and express their own beliefs. Their records show that they have learnt about religions and from religions. They are able

to express their own views and have the capacity to appreciate the natural world. They make comparisons of customs associated in religions, for example, linked to the journey of life, and death and also pilgrimage. They show some understanding of choices of different paths through life. Pupils in Year 5/6 have had access to the same teacher on occasions, and had access to similar ideas. Pupils were, however, not confident enough to talk about what they had learnt, and were at times confused between religions and subjects. Their written work indicated that they have studied about 'festivals of fire and light', but their study had not led to an in-depth understanding about the linked ideas in the religions.

96. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are wide variations. There are clear expectations in Year 2 about what pupils are expected to achieve. In Year 5/6 expectations are unclear in the plans about what pupils should be learning and achieving. Teachers are beginning to use new systems of assessment, introduced recently, but there appears to be no urgency as the subject does not have a high enough profile in the school's curriculum.
97. Teachers in Years 1-2, teach religious education mainly through stories and discussions, using religious artefacts as necessary, to aid pupils' understanding. Pupils in Year 2 learn about 'special people' in religions, 'special times' and 'special places'.
98. The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in its coverage. It includes the different aspects of religious education in a satisfactory balance. However, it is not taught to a satisfactory depth, particularly for older pupils, and systems for assuring continuity and progression in their learning are not good enough.
99. Religious education makes a sound contribution to school assemblies, and to pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Often, Bible stories are told and festivals are celebrated from different religions. The school celebrates 'Multi-cultural Week', when the focus of the work is on aspects of another country and religion. At Christmas and Easter, cross-curricular work is done on the Christian stories.
100. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject have only recently started and are not yet a regular part of the school's work. The new subject leader who is a temporary part-time teacher is keen for the school to move forward and has strategic plans for this. She has managed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject, and has started guiding and supporting her colleagues. Resources are adequate but in need of updating, to support the teaching of all religions, particularly Christian faith. Systematic assessment and recording have not yet begun in all classes therefore the subject leader does not have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning in each class. There is unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection when standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were reported to be good. It is too early to see the impact of this leadership on improving the quality of teaching and learning and in raising standards.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Work in art and design, design and technology and music was sampled. Physical education was inspected in full and is reported on below.

101. **Art and design** standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6. This is similar to standards at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils achieve well and are offered a variety of experiences to learn, develop and display skills using a wide variety of media such as sketching, painting, and some three-dimensional work. There were very few examples of work seen in the style of other artists other than in a Year 4/5 class where there were some good examples of work in the style of Giuseppe Acrimboldo. Art is linked well to work in other subjects, for example, in Year 3 about rivers and the ancient Egyptians where pupils made their own sculpture related to their work in geography and history. Displays of work around the school are positively presented and show that pupils' work is valued.

102. Two lessons in **design and technology** were observed during the inspection, one in Year 5/6 and one in Year 3. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were satisfactory overall. However, lessons observed, discussion with teachers, pupils and scrutiny of resources being used confirm a secure curriculum and a practical approach to learning. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good and they behave well.
103. The school is fortunate that **music** is taught by a specialist teacher. It was not possible to observe any music teaching during the inspection as all lessons take place at the end of the week after the end of the inspection. In school assemblies pupils sing hymns and songs well related to their work. They sing harmoniously and many remember the words well. They also have opportunities to learn new songs. Pupils gain enjoyment from familiar songs and their singing is tuneful. Year 2 pupils were fortunate during the inspection to take part in a musical workshop. This was held at the school and involved eight other schools in the Tiptree and Stanway consortium. Great enjoyment was had by all.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their physical education activities.
- Swimming is strength of the school.
- Residential visits for Year 6 provide good opportunities to extend and complement school-based activities.
- Resources are good overall.
- Space becomes a problem when the fixed apparatus is used.

Commentary

104. Standards in physical education are in line with those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This represents a somewhat similar picture to that of the previous inspection, confirming that standards have been maintained.
105. Pupils display positive attitudes to their physical education lessons. They dress appropriately, display a clear understanding of health and safety matters and are aware of the effect physical activity has on the body. Over time in the school and supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, pupils develop confidence, self-discipline and other personal qualities, such as dependency and supporting their peers. Pupils share their ideas, work well in pairs and use opportunities provided to examine the work of their peers and offer ways in which they could improve. Even when space is limited they show spatial awareness and show sensible and mature attitudes. They discuss and create different sequences and a feature of all lessons

observed was that of enjoyment. They are aware of the need to warm up and cool down and in a dance lesson observed, pupils demonstrated well their creative interpretation of the mood and rhythm of the music. The curriculum is well balanced, offering a wide range of disciplines, including gymnastics, dance, games, athletics and swimming. The school has its own pool which is open air but heated and is open from half-term in the summer term until the weather becomes inclement. All pupils have swimming lessons and it is unusual for any pupil not to succeed in achieving the 25 metre unaided swim. The school curriculum is extended and enhanced for pupils of Years 5 and 6 who every other year visit Dorset for a residential experience. This offers a range of different activities which enhance and complement the statutory curriculum. It further supports the social and moral development of pupils, promoting independence and inter-dependence.

106. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers consider the individual needs of all pupils and in the lessons observed it was not possible to distinguish pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties as all succeeded well. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work in pairs, which contributes to the high quality of relationships in the school.
107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In lessons seen, management of pupil behaviour is good, with high quality relationships. However, careful consideration needs to be given to setting out equipment prior to the lesson. This restricts space considerably for pupils to do their warm-up and floor activities. Resources are good overall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

PSHE was sampled.

108. Satisfactory provision is made for personal, social and health education (PSHE), including sex and relationships education, drugs awareness and citizenship. PSHE is often taught through 'circle times'. There is no school council as yet but the newly introduced system of class councils is proving useful in providing practical opportunities for pupils to develop good qualities of citizenship, such as problem solving, voting and decision making. The school gives due importance to developing healthy eating habits through science and health education.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

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

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

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