

INSPECTION REPORT

PARSONS HEATH CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115088

Headteacher: Mrs S Clover

Lead inspector: Mr N F Sherman

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 May 2005

Inspection number: 267481

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: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 199

School address: Templewood Road
Colchester
Essex
Postcode: C04 3EZ

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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr P Hood

Date of previous inspection: June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Parsons Heath Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School lies on the outskirts of Colchester in Essex. Most pupils come from families who live close to the school but some travel from further afield. The social circumstances for some pupils are quite challenging. There are 199 pupils on the school roll, which is about average. Numbers have fallen slightly since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to have free school meals is average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is above average as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. There are pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, but only one pupil needs additional assistance with learning English. This is below average when compared with other schools nationally. The school received a School's Achievement Award in 2003 as well as achieving the Investors in People and Healthy Schools awards in 2004. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16493	Mr N Sherman	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology The Foundation Stage English as an additional language
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector	
20007	Mr T Neat	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education Physical education
1963	Mrs S Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English History Geography Music Personal, social and health education and citizenship Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is effective and provides its pupils with a good quality of education. Pupils' achievements are good overall, although those in science could be higher. There is much good and very good teaching in all classes and many pupils derive great enjoyment in their learning. There is strong and purposeful leadership of the school that bodes well for its continued development. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- pupils achieve well overall and achievement in English is very good;
- standards in art and design are well above average in Year 2 and Year 6;
- the school is well led and the headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership;
- children in the Foundation Stage get a very good start to their education;
- achievement in science is not as high as in English and mathematics;
- opportunities for coordinators to monitor the non-core subjects are too few;
- provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good;
- pupils are a credit to the school, work hard in lessons and treat each other with a high level of respect;
- arrangements to assess pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics do not contribute sufficiently to raising standards.

The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Firm and rigorous action has been taken to tackle the shortcomings identified in the previous report. Provision for information and communication technology has improved greatly resulting in pupils reaching higher standards. Concerted efforts to develop the curriculum, provision in the Foundation Stage and teaching generally are further factors that have contributed to school improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is **good** overall. The achievement of children in the Reception year is good, and they make good progress from a low starting point. The children's attainment by the end of the Foundation Stage is average in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. In their personal, social, emotional, and creative development, children reach standards that are above average. Current standards in Year 2 are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science; this reflects the well below average attainment of these pupils on entry to the school. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good overall, reflecting the good teaching and the very positive attitudes of the pupils. In the 2004 Year 6 national tests, pupils' attainment was average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Compared to their attainment on entry, the pupils' performance in Year 6 was very good in mathematics, good in science and satisfactory in English. Current standards in Year 6, pupils' attainment is well above the national average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and very well in English, where the standards in writing are particularly high. Achievement in science is not

as high as in English and mathematics due to the inconsistent way teachers use investigative work to promote learning in science. Pupils achieve very highly in art and design and standards are well above average. Standards in information and communication technology are average and a good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards in other subjects are average.

Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Teachers make creative use of the potential in various subjects to promote the pupils' understanding of the world in which they live and how they can make an effective contribution to society. The behaviour and attitudes of most pupils are very good. Pupils' attendance is good as is the degree of punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides pupils with a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 1 to 6 and very good in the Foundation Stage. Good learning is characterised by pupils' good levels of concentration and an active curiosity about what they are being taught. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6, and good in the Foundation Stage. Good use is made of assessment information in English and mathematics to track pupils' progress and attainment. The school provides a good curriculum for all pupils, and that for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The accommodation is very good and resources are of a high quality. Pupils are very well cared for, and a high degree of sensitivity is demonstrated towards those with a very high level of physical need. Links with parents are good, although some parents need further support to help their children in their learning. Links with the community are good, as they are with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

There is good leadership and management of the school. The headteacher provides very clear leadership, providing a firm educational steer to the school's continued development. The leadership of other key staff is good. However, co-ordinators in subjects other than English and mathematics get too few opportunities to monitor directly the teaching and learning. Good use is made of the budget to fund both the educational and physical development of the school. Governance of the school is satisfactory and governors fulfil all their statutory duties.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The vast majority of parents are pleased with the school and are appreciative of its friendliness and the warm welcome they receive when they visit. Many parents point to the good progress that the school has made since the previous inspection and in the way the school achieves a good balance in enabling their children to achieve well and learn in a warm and welcoming environment. Pupils of all ages are very keen to come to school and take a full and active role in all that the school has to offer them. They are suitably involved and encouraged to have a say in the school and they respond well to this degree of challenge.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Within the context of its many good features, the most important things the school should do to improve are:

- raise pupils' achievements in science;
- increase the opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor teaching and learning in subjects other than in English and mathematics;
- develop a consistent approach to the monitoring of pupils' progress in subjects other than the core subjects of the curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards in English are well above the national average and are above average in mathematics by the time pupils leave the school. Standards in science are average. Standards are average in all other subjects except in art and design where they are well above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of the children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Although standards are below average in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 and 2, given their low attainment when starting school, pupils achieve well.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 in most subjects and in English, achievement is very good.
- Standards and achievement in art and design are very high.
- Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement overall in the standards attained by pupils in information and communication technology.
- Achievement in science is not as high as in English and mathematics.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, enabling them to achieve well.

Commentary

1. When they start school, the attainment of the children in the Foundation Stage is below average overall, especially in terms of their communication, language and literacy skills. There is a wide range of ability in the class with some higher attaining children who learn quickly coupled with those with high levels of special educational need. The children get off to a very good start in the Foundation Stage class, and their achievement is good overall. By the time the children move into the Year 1 class, their attainment is at the expected level in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical development, and above the level expected in their creative development and personal, social and emotional development.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average points score in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.6 (16.1)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	13.9 (13.5)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	14.5 (16.1)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The 2004 national test results show that pupils' attainment in Year 2 is above average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, the pupils' performance is the same in reading but much lower in writing and mathematics. The teacher assessments for science suggest that standards are below the national average. Over the past few years, standards in reading have improved but those in writing and mathematics have dipped. This is primarily due to the performance of boys which is not as strong as that of girls. This reflects the higher number of boys who have special educational needs. The school is

very much aware of this disparity in attainment and it has implemented measures to monitor, track and address the issue.

3. The inspection findings indicate that standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are below the national average in Year 2. Nearly three quarters of the current Year 2 class are boys and a high number of them have special educational needs, with their difficulties being particularly linked to aspects of language development. The inspection findings present a more positive picture than the results of the most recent tests. Additional evidence gathered during the inspection suggests that throughout Years 1 and 2, the pupils' achievement is good in English, mathematics and science.
4. Pupils' achievement in art and design is very good in Years 1 and 2, reflecting the quality of the work they produce, which is often of a very high quality for their age. Standards in this age group in all other subjects are in line with the national average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average points score in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.6 (29.7)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.6 (26.8)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.0 (28.9)	28.6 (28.6)

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

5. The results of the 2004 national tests in Year 6 show that pupils' attainment was average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science. Up until 2004, standards in English had been consistently well above average yet dipped in 2004 due to the fewer than average number of pupils reaching the higher levels in the tests. Standards have risen sharply in mathematics over the same period and in science, they have been at an average level. Based on their attainment when in Year 2, the pupils' performance was very high in mathematics, above average in science and average in English. This suggests that pupils have made good progress overall since the end of Year 2.
6. The inspection findings show that standards in Year 6 are well above the national average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. The inspection findings vary slightly from the test results for 2004. They show that in English a high proportion of pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work indicating that the results in 2004 were more of a 'blip' rather than any significant fall in performance. The school's assessment data indicates that while the boys perform at the same level in mathematics and science, their performance is better than that of the girls in the English tests. However, although the inspection focused on why this may be the case, inspection evidence indicated that girls perform equally as well as the boys. The achievement of pupils is very good in English and mathematics. In science, while achievement is satisfactory overall, it is not as high as that seen in English and mathematics. This is primarily due to the higher-attaining pupils sometimes being given the same work as that for less able pupils in the class and given too few opportunities to follow their own lines of enquiry in their investigative work. The trend of improvement since the previous inspection in how well pupils perform in National Curriculum tests has been higher than average.
7. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with the national average in Year 6. This marks a good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were below average. Achievement overall is good. In religious education, pupils attain standards that are in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and achievement is good. In art and design, achievement is very

good and pupils successfully build on the skills they have learned in the lower part of the school and continue to produce work of a very high quality. Standards in history are average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and towards each other. Behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good. The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good; teachers make creative use of different subjects in promoting this.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school, pupils are respectful to one another and are very kind to those with a high level of special need.
- The overall quality of behaviour in the school is very good.
- Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes, and they enjoy their learning.
- Attendance rates are good.
- The school gives careful consideration to and is very effective in promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

8. Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and their learning and this marks a good improvement since the previous inspection. Expectations of how the school expects the pupils to work in lessons have been significantly raised and this has had a positive bearing on the pupils' willingness to learn. Many lessons are characterised by the pupils being keen to succeed and to live up to the teachers' high expectations of them. Pupils listen attentively in assemblies and are keen to learn from the adults who lead these. Pupils play a full and active part in all that the school has to offer and participation rates in sporting and extra-curricular activities are high.
9. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. This high standard of behaviour is very much characterised by the sensitivity demonstrated by all pupils towards those with a high level of special educational need. This helps the pupils concerned to feel at ease in the school confidently knowing that if they ever have a particular difficulty other pupils would help. Movement around the school is calm and orderly and the pupils understand well the need for the school to have rules and guidelines to help ensure this. The school has good procedures in place to set right any issues relating to bullying. Pupils are confident that when any instances of inappropriate behaviour may occur, it will be dealt with fairly and consistently. One pupil was temporarily excluded on three different occasions during the past year, reflecting the school's strong commitment to ensuring that the behaviour of a minority does not adversely affect the majority of others.
10. Provision for the pupils' personal development is very good. Much thought by staff goes into planning how the day-to-day organisation of the school and the different subjects of the curriculum can contribute effectively to pupils' understanding of the world around them. Assemblies are used very well in this respect and the pupils understand well how the coming together as a school community is a special part of the day. Subjects such as art and design and design and technology are used well to develop pupils' understanding of the beauty in the world around them. The pupils' cultural development is promoted very well through careful exploration of different religions and by exploring the geographical and historical features of their own and other countries.

11. Overall, attendance was above the national average last year, with little unauthorised absence. This year so far, apart from an outbreak of chickenpox, which reduced it in the spring, this good level of attendance has been maintained. The school monitors attendance well and makes effective use of the education welfare service to reduce lateness. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in terms of attendance registers not always being taken in the afternoon sessions have been remedied.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)			
Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.1	School data :	0.4
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.5
<i>The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.</i>			

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	158	3	0

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education for all pupils. Teaching is good throughout the school and has many very good features. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The curriculum for pupils in the rest of the school is good. Assessment is satisfactory overall and good in English and mathematics. Accommodation is very good overall and resources are good. The school provides very good levels of care, support and guidance for the pupils. Links with parents are good, and links with the community and other schools are good.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school, and teaching has many very good features. In Years 1 to 6, assessment is good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in other subjects. It is good in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

- Teaching and learning are very good in the Foundation Stage.
- Effective staff development on how best to improve pupils' learning has brought about significant improvements in teaching.
- Teachers are very effective in the way in which they engage pupils' interests in their learning.
- Those with special educational needs are supported very well, enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates.
- The teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics is good.
- Teachers make effective use of assessment data to plan pupils' subsequent learning in English and mathematics.
- There is no whole school approach to assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good and there is a high degree of very good teaching. Mutual and concentrated efforts by staff to consider the most effective ways in which teaching can boost learning have led to marked improvements in the overall quality of teaching since that found at the last inspection. In almost half of the lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was very good or better. In the remainder of lessons, teaching and learning were often good.
13. The teaching of basic skills is often good in English and mathematics, resulting in good achievement and high levels of enthusiasm among pupils for what they are to learn. The teaching of science is satisfactory, although the overall impact of this is lessened due to the few opportunities pupils have to undertake open-ended investigation work. The teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory and improved over that found at the time of the previous inspection when teachers lacked the subject knowledge and confidence in how best to integrate the use of computers into their day-to-day teaching. There is more variation in the quality of teaching in the foundation subjects because co-ordinators have not had the opportunity to monitor classroom practice to identify weaknesses and to share good practice.
14. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is very good. The teacher not only has very good subject knowledge but astutely uses this to plan and organise the most effective ways in which the children's learning can be promoted. Care is taken to ensure an appropriate balance between self-chosen activities and ones that are teacher led. The highly effective teaching leads to children who are eager to learn, are enthused by the tasks they are set and are well prepared to begin the more formal aspects of the National Curriculum when they enter Year 1.
15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Some are given additional support to boost their basic skills and confidence by being taught in small groups and the quality of this input is very good. Care is taken to ensure that the work they undertake matches their ability and reflects the individual targets that have been set for them in their individual education plans. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning and relationships between the pupils and adults are warm and purposeful. The pupils' progress is carefully monitored and the warm praise and encouragement they receive from those who support them in their learning, enables them to feel they have achieved success.
16. The quality of teaching is such that it results in pupils making secure gains in their learning. Lessons provide the pupils with good opportunities to bounce ideas off one another and to listen to the views of their classmates. This develops well the pupils' understanding of learning from others by sharing, listening and coming to an agreed consensus when working in small groups. The strong relationships teachers have with pupils create a classroom climate where pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and that learning can be achieved through trial and error.
17. Assessment arrangements in English and mathematics are good and careful use is made of the assessment data to evaluate teaching and learning and to help set a steer for further whole school development. While teachers assess in other subjects, and in some cases this is good, there is no common whole school approach to the formal recording and assessment of the pupils' progress. As a result, while some teachers receive quite detailed notes from a pupils' previous teacher on how well the pupils have learned, for others the remarks and observations are too skimpy for them to be of use to the teacher planning the next steps in pupils' learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	14	4	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and pupils' learning is enhanced well by the good opportunities to learn through extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest. The accommodation, staffing and learning resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 has improved greatly since the last inspection and now makes a good contribution to the standards that pupils achieve.
- The school works very hard to make sure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed, but provision for the most able is not fully effective.
- High quality grounds and buildings boost learning opportunities.

Commentary

18. The weaknesses identified in the last report have been tackled very well. Effective programmes of work have been implemented for all subjects. Good use is made of national planning guidance to ensure that skills are developed progressively and generally planning meets the needs of pupils of different abilities. The school now plans effectively for the development of pupils' skills of investigation in mathematics and science.
19. The school regularly reviews the quality of the curriculum and makes innovations when it considers these will help to better pupils' achievements. It makes good use of techniques to accelerate learning by planning activities in lessons such as 'brain gym' to ensure that pupils are fully focused on what is taught. It has introduced timetabled periods in which thinking skills are taught.
20. Much discussion takes place about how the needs of groups and individuals are to be met. For example, the curriculum for a class with an imbalance of boys and girls has been adapted to ensure that learning takes place as effectively as possible. A good start has been made in planning to cater for gifted and talented pupils, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to make the arrangements fully effective.
21. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good. There is very good equality of access and opportunity for pupils with special educational needs and they are included fully in the life of the school. All pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Individual Education Plans are prepared with clear and measurable targets, activities and resources that enable these pupils to achieve their best. In addition, the coordinator for special educational needs runs a very good early morning club to give extra support to pupils who have poor concentration and problems with eye co-ordination. The pupils who attend the club show a high-level of interest and engagement because of the specialist activities and support given to them.
22. The curriculum is complemented well by a good range of activities outside lessons. There is good support for learning through homework, computer and 'Early Bird'

literacy clubs. The opportunities available to pupils with special educational needs at the 'Exerceyes' meetings are especially effective in developing learning skills. An abundance of visits and visitors, including enthusiasts and experts in a number of fields such as wildlife, add depth and variety to the range of learning opportunities.

23. The accommodation is very good. Outdoor provision is particularly good. The school site is spacious, offering good opportunities for developing games and athletics skills. The school has its own swimming pool, helping it to promote good standards in this aspect of the curriculum. A trim trail and a wealth of play equipment encourage constructive, collaborative and imaginative play. The outdoor sculptures produced by an artist working recently with the school make an important aesthetic contribution. During the inspection a teacher used them to help pupils to design their own sculptures. A very good range of equipment, books and materials enhances teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures for ensuring pupils' health, welfare and safety are very good. The school provides good academic and pastoral guidance and support and effectively involves pupils in the work and development of the school very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Health, safety and child protection procedures are very thorough.
- Individual pupils are well cared for and can always turn to someone they trust for advice and support.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are good.
- The school has effective arrangements for involving pupils in the day-to-day life of the school.

Commentary

24. There are very good arrangements to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Staff and governors complete health and safety risk assessments regularly to ensure detailed coverage; they record concerns and the action taken. When pupils are taken on activities off the site, the risks are formally assessed and appropriate precautions recorded before they leave. Staff carefully examine and maintain all equipment. Staff and governors work very well together to keep the premises safe. Child protection procedures are secure and staff well trained. Members of staff trained in first aid take good care of pupils who have accidents.
25. Although a small number of parents had some concerns, relationships between adults and pupils in the school are very good. Discussion with pupils indicated that they trust their teachers and rely on them to sort out any difficulties they may have. Lunchtime supervisory staff are well trained and fully integrated into the pastoral and disciplinary system so that liaison between them and the teachers is very good. Teachers know the pupils well and give a high level of pastoral support. Formal systems, although satisfactory, are more focused on individual attitudes to work. Academic targets are set for the whole class, most commonly in mathematics and English.
26. The school effectively introduces parents and children to the policies of the school, enabling the children to settle quickly and happily into the school's day-to-day routines. Parents can meet the staff to discuss school life and ask questions. The children experience some time in the classroom before they start. Members of staff are on hand both before and after school to resolve any small concerns. Parents are very satisfied with these arrangements.

27. The school regularly consults pupils about their views and sometimes these inform the content of the school development plan. For example, members of staff ask pupils how well they thought speaking and listening was developed in school. The school council, as well as a very useful tool in demonstrating some aspects of citizenship such as democracy, also acts as a good medium for communication between pupils and the school. Councillors can feed back discussions to their class and there is a suggestion box for items for discussion.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents and the community. Liaison with other schools provides good support for the education of the pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents support the school but a small minority have concerns.
- The school has strong links with the community, particularly the church.
- Pupils' annual reports do not give sufficient information on how well pupils have progressed in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

Commentary

28. Parents are generally supportive of the school. In their questionnaire, a minority had concerns about their child liking school and information on progress. The majority of responses agreed, rather than agreed strongly, with the positive statements. Parents are regularly informed about what is happening in the school through regular newsletters and information about what will be taught during the year. They have the opportunity to talk informally to staff if they have small problems at the start and finish of the school day. There are regular formal meetings with teachers and parents find these useful. The school has some difficulty in persuading parents to attend workshops on how they can help learning at home but the few that do attend are enthusiastic. Most hear younger children read at home and several parents help regularly in school. The Parent Teacher Association raises funds and organises social activities for children and families.
29. The format of pupils' annual reports has been changed recently. They give good information about English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology with details of standards achieved and targets for improvement. However, the grouping of grades for the remaining subjects does not give sufficient information on progress in each subject.
30. Pupils' experience of life is broadened by visits to school by local organisations such as the fire service and a local theatre group. Sport is enhanced by the Football in the Community project supported by the Colchester United players. In turn, pupils contribute to the community by performing at outside events and at old people's homes at Christmas. A very productive link with a department store allows both pupils and staff to work in partnership to enhance their skills. Links with the church support religious education and spiritual and moral development.
31. The school has a strong input into local pre-school education, giving advice and support to several groups. The good relations which have been established smooth the transfer of children to the Reception class. Links with local primary schools are very strong, led by the headteacher as chair of the consortium of local schools. Shared finance, catering and training facilities increases efficiency and the expertise of staff. This school is hoping to re-establish more productive curriculum links with the local

secondary school, but the transfer process is smooth and pupils make the transfer with little trauma.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership of key staff backs the very good leadership of the headteacher. Finance is well managed and it supports school development well. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is committed to improvement and has, step-by-step, ensured that all members of staff share a common purpose. Improvement has been well managed.
- Senior managers provide effective leadership, manage their responsibilities well and provide good support for the headteacher.
- Very effective co-ordination of special educational needs helps the school to be inclusive.
- The school organises and maintains its finances well so that pupils gain maximum benefits from its resources.
- Monitoring of the foundation subjects is not effectively devolved to co-ordinators to develop their roles fully.

Commentary

32. The headteacher provides very good leadership and she has a very clear vision for the school's ongoing development. She is very reflective and thorough, making clear decisions for the future of the school. The headteacher has created, and sustains, a very good ethos for learning that is challenging as well as supportive. The leadership from key staff is good. The deputy headteacher, for example, plays a key part in supporting the work of the headteacher and she too has a good understanding of what the school does well. Self-evaluation procedures are very good and much improved since the previous inspection. The outcome is that everyone is striving for improvement and striving to ensure that all children achieve to the best of their ability.
33. Parents are pleased with the way in which the school is led and managed. In particular, they like the way in which the headteacher has responded to national initiatives and yet has ensured that the school meets the needs of pupils. The quality of education has improved since the last inspection because the headteacher has had a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and has systematically tackled those areas needing improvement. Staff development is effectively linked to the school improvement plan, which usefully highlights the course of educational development in the school, and to the annual staff performance management targets.
34. A distinctive feature of management in the school is the effective way in which all members of staff are working towards whole school developments and ensure the school works smoothly on a daily basis. The development and implementation of curriculum planning has been well led as all subjects are now planned and taught, following national guidance and other suitable schemes. Good examples of this work include fostering more curriculum links between subjects and improving provision for speaking and listening as well as investigation in mathematics and science. The good leadership and management in core subjects has helped to improve standards and achievements by Year 6 but assessment is not yet consistently good across all subjects. The co-ordinators in the foundation subjects do not have regular opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects and this limits their overall effectiveness making it difficult for them to share best practice.

35. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and ensures that pupils receive specific support from within the school and from outside agencies. Teaching assistants have received very good training which is evident in the quality of support they offer. The legal requirements of the national code of practice are fully met enabling the pupils concerned to play a full and active part in school life.
36. Policies are implemented consistently across the school. For example, members of staff are clear about their personal objectives and this is evident in the high proportion of good or better teaching seen during the inspection and through the school's own monitoring. Staff, pupils and governors contribute to the school development plan and so know the part they have to play in school improvement. All staff work closely together to provide a common approach to behaviour and to ensure that the school's commitment towards inclusion is seen in many aspects of the school's day-to-day life.
37. The budget is used and managed efficiently and effectively. In recent times the school has experienced, in keeping with other schools in the area, a slight fall in the numbers on roll. This has put pressure on the budget. However, careful housekeeping in terms of particular grants given to the school has ensured that physical development and refurbishment of the school has been able to go ahead. Plans and costs, for example, have been devised to enable the central courtyard of the school to be more fully utilized and will improve what the school has to offer the pupils in terms of accommodation still further. Since the last inspection, finances have been carefully directed towards providing a new information and communication technology suite and ensuring teachers are confident to use computers and deliver the National Curriculum. The headteacher and governors understand and rigorously apply the principles of best value enabling maximum return for the funds allocated. As a result, the school provides good value for money.
38. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Many are new to their role following a recent high turnover of governors. They are satisfactorily led and chaired. Members have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, not only through the headteacher keeping them well informed, but also through the frequent visits they make. There is both a planned and an informal programme of visits by governors to the school to find out more about how the school operates on a daily basis. Under the careful guidance of the headteacher governors are starting to develop their understanding of how best to perform their role as the school's 'critical friend'.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	629,858	Balance from the previous year	13,706
Total expenditure	622,343	Balance carried forward to the next	21,221
Expenditure per pupil	3,096		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and there has been marked improvement since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage members of staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children and plan their learning very well.
- Support assistants play a key and effective role in supporting children's learning.
- Those with a very high level of special educational needs are included in all aspects of learning.
- Throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers use assessment information effectively to monitor the children's progress.
- Good use is made of the outside area and there is creative use of teaching space to support the children in their learning.
- Good links with parents ensure a smooth start to the children's education.

Commentary

39. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Of note have been the improvements made to the curriculum and in developing the outside area so that children can learn more thoroughly using this area. Although there is no covered area for learning to take place outside the classroom in more inclement weather, the school has plans to provide such facilities.
40. The school admits children to the Foundation Stage on a twice yearly basis depending on their birthdates. Children born in the autumn or spring term enter full time in September and those born in the summer term enter in January.
41. Teaching is very well planned. It takes into account the national guidance given to schools to help plan learning for children of this age. Various themes are carefully chosen for children to explore and these often capture their interest and enthusiasm. Resources are of a very good quality and used well to support the children's learning. Although attainment can vary from year to year, children generally enter the Foundation Stage with below average levels of ability. However, because of the very good teaching and provision, by the time they enter Year 1, most children will have achieved the national goals for early learning in each area and they will have exceeded them in their creative and personal, social and emotional development. Children, including those with special educational needs, some of whom have a very high level of need, achieve well.
42. The co-ordinator has developed a good induction programme that helps to reassure parents that their children will be settled well into the school. Leadership is very effective and the co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the most effective ways in which young children learn and how teaching, assessment and the curriculum can be best channelled to meet all children's needs. Children are regularly assessed and the two learning support assistants who work with the teacher are heavily involved in this process. As a result, the information that is gathered is used well to put together a broad profile of each child further assisting in helping each of the children to get a very good start to their educational life.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given very good opportunities to work in pairs and groups.
- Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their own lines on enquiry.
- Children are taught the basic social etiquettes well.

Commentary

43. Children achieve very well in this area of their learning, primarily due to the very good teaching they receive. As a result, they reach standards that exceed the national goals for early learning. Good attention is paid to ensuring that the children learn the importance of play to socialising effectively with one another and learning to treat one another with good kindness and respect. Children are taught to change for themselves, use resources effectively and to return them after their use. The children respond well to the high expectations that the teacher has of them in this regard and a key feature of their learning is the manner in which they listen, are keen to answer questions and put into practice what they are taught. When taking part in 'Circle Time' sessions, for example, they are keen to listen carefully to what their classmates have to say and the children wait patiently for those who do not always have the confidence to air answers in public. The children develop good skills of independent learning as they move through the Foundation Stage, and by the end of the Reception year, they access resources readily, make decisions about their work, and show good levels of confidence when faced with problems and are keen to tackle these on their own without the assistance of an adult.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given very good opportunities through creative play to develop their early skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening.
- Fiction is well used to stimulate pupils' learning.
- Learning support assistants support the children well in this area of their learning.

Commentary

44. The children achieve well in this area of learning because of very good teaching which places strong emphasis on developing the pupils' skills and confidence in developing and using their language skills in everyday contexts. As a result, most children attain the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. A number of children enter the Reception class with weak communication skills. Careful and regular assessment of the children's progress ensures that the work they are given matches their ability enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates.
45. Literacy skills are taught well in the Reception classes, and the children are well prepared for their transfer to Year 1. The teacher manages to achieve a good balance between focusing on the more formal teaching of skills yet providing the children with sufficient scope to use reading and writing skills as part of their play activities. A wide range of fiction is used to promote pupils' interest in books and the children sit and listen to the stories often enthralled as to how it may develop. Good and effective

emphasis on the teaching of letter sounds ensures that the children have secure skills to improve their reading and writing. The children are encouraged to write in a range of contexts, and are given good support by both the teacher and assistants to copy words correctly as they learn to write simple statements that eventually develop into sentences which they then read back to an adult or their friends in the class. Good use is made of outside visitors and visits to places of educational interest to promote language skills, such as visits from mothers who may have recently had a baby. These help to promote high levels of enthusiasm and interest, and encourage the children to develop their speaking and listening skills.

Mathematical Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Games and equipment are used well to reinforce children's early learning of mathematical ideas.
- Learning support assistants support the children well in this area of their learning.

Commentary

46. Very good teaching enables children to achieve well. The children's attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage is at the expected level. Throughout the children's first year in school, a strong emphasis is placed on promoting their understanding of mathematical language and this is suitably reinforced by activities such as playing in the sand and water. At the start of the school day the children count how many children are present and work out how many are absent. Opening parts to lessons often include counting activities. These sessions are usually followed by children having very good opportunities to engage in a wide range of mathematical play activities using a suitable range of games and resources. The skills of the learning support assistants are used to good effect as they guide the children to a deeper understanding of terms such as 'corners', 'sides' and 'faces'. The Reception children develop a good level of confidence in their use of number skills, and most have a good understanding of the notion of counting forwards and backwards. By the end of the Reception year, most children name and recognise two-dimensional shapes with higher-attaining children identifying three-dimensional shapes. Children develop a secure understanding of how to write the numbers one to ten and are developing an equally secure perception of terms such as addition and subtraction.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the local area to broaden the pupils' learning.
- Successful links with other areas help to reinforce the children's learning of the world in which they live.
- Children make good progress in their early understanding of different religions.

Commentary

47. Children achieve well in this area of their learning and reach standards that are in line with the early learning goals. Teaching is very good and characterised by the deft way in which the teacher interweaves other areas of learning into promoting the pupils'

early understanding of the world in which they live. The Foundation Stage children take part in all assemblies and this helps to broaden their understanding of different religions. They know, for example, that Jesus was a special person to Christians and that a church is a place where people are christened.

48. By exploring themes such as 'Flowers', the children successfully learn that other living creatures share their world and they too need food and water in order to thrive. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their ability to use computers and other information and communication technology related equipment. They use a mouse competently when using a simple art package, for example, to construct simple pictures.

Physical Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given good opportunities to develop their physical skills.
- Purposeful links with other areas of learning successfully promote the children's learning.
- The outside area is used well for the children's physical development.

Commentary

49. By the end of the Reception year, the children attain the expected level in terms of their physical development. Teaching is good. Good use is made both formally and during the informal parts of the day such as break times, of the outside area for the development of physical skills, or for structured play activities for particular groups of children. Those with a high level of physical need are given every encouragement to use the games, trikes and general play area ensuring that the children concerned are fully included in the full range learning opportunities. The teaching of finer physical skills such as cutting, sticking and applying is often good, as teachers focus well on helping the children to develop good pencil grip and brush control. Children are encouraged to change quickly and when in the hall, they change direction and are learning to stretch and hold a given position. The outdoor environment is used well. Members of staff provide a wealth of very good quality learning experiences which help the children to learn how to gain control of small pieces of equipment such as jigsaws and bead-threading activities. Adults provide just the right degree of intervention that helps the children to master new skills.

Creative Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given good opportunities to draw, paint and use a range of malleable materials.
- Effective use is made of imaginative role-play areas to support the children's learning.

Commentary

50. Children achieve very well in this aspect of their learning and teaching, which is very good, promotes their learning well. Children are on course to reach standards that are higher than typically found. The teacher has a very good awareness of the importance that imaginative role-play has in the creative development of the children. The class

'Flower Shop,' for example is used well to promote the children's play as they write lists of what flowers to buy, pay for them and cut out paper to wrap them in. Children enjoy this sort of work greatly and enter into the role-play situations with consummate ease. These links are effectively extended to the children painting large flowers and their work demonstrates they can apply paint even-handedly. Children develop their understanding of pattern well by using flowers to make prints using wood block shapes. In all three classes, paints are readily available and children hold brushes correctly. Similarly, children are provided with good opportunities to use a range of recycled and malleable materials to make simple models. They enjoy singing songs and rhymes. In addition, they are given good opportunities to use a range of simple musical instruments and they develop a good early understanding of their names and the types of sounds that they make.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good with significant strengths, resulting in the pupils achieving very well and reaching high standards in Year 6.
- Standards are below average in Year 2.
- The very effective use of teaching assistants contributes to the achievement of pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in other subjects.
- The subject is very well led and pupils' progress is carefully monitored.

Commentary

51. The 2004 end of Year 2 National Curriculum test results show that pupils' attainment in reading was above average and in writing it was below average. When the results are compared with similar schools, they show that standards in Year 2 were above average in reading and well below average in writing. The 2004 National Curriculum results for pupils in Year 6 show that pupils' attainment was average when compared with all schools and average when the results are compared with similar schools.
52. Inspection findings point to a different picture in terms of the standards being reached by the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. They indicate that standards are well above average in Year 6 and more in line with test results for previous years when standards were often well above average. Standards are, however, below average in both reading and writing in Year 2, reflecting the differences in attainment on entry to the school. Standards in Year 6 have improved since the last inspection whereas standards in Year 2 are lower than those at the last inspection. This is because the attainment on entry for the current Year 2 was well below average.
53. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by Years 2 and very well by Year 6 from their point of entry. While National Curriculum test data indicates boys performing better than the girls in English at the end of Year 6, inspection evidence could find no difference in terms of how girls achieve compared to boys. One of the reasons for the good levels of achievement is due to the headteacher and the subject leader tracking pupils' progress with great care and by rigorously monitoring teaching. The quality of teaching is consistently good with many good features. One of these lies in the way teachers share the learning intention at the start of each lesson, and consequently, the pupils know what they were expected to learn.

Another good feature in teaching is the way the teachers use questions, and discussion to promote learning. As the school has focused on improving pupils' skills in speaking and listening, there are many opportunities for discussion and drama related activities in lessons and pupils participate well in groups or pairs. The lessons are very well planned in the main and the activities provided by the teachers are often stimulating, capturing the interest and imagination of the pupils. In a very good Year 1 lesson on retelling the story of Grace Darling, for example, the pupils dressed up as the characters in the story and answered questions to provide information. Consequently, speaking and listening skills were developed very well. Pupils generally learn to speak confidently and readily volunteer to answer questions and to read aloud in class. Standards in these activities are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6, an area of improvement since the last inspection.

54. The strong focus on the teaching of letter sounds linked to spelling helps many pupils to read fluently and spell correctly by Year 2 but their understanding of what they read is limited. They find it difficult to predict what might happen next in the story. Although pupils enjoy books, they are not able to discuss them or express their preferences for authors or books. Consequently, standards in reading are below average. As pupils move up the school, they develop good reading skills and their understanding in reading deepens. By Year 6, pupils achieve very well and reach high standards in reading. Standards in writing are improving and all groups of pupils are achieving well. Pupils' books in Year 6 show that they write at length, sustaining ideas, using correct grammar and punctuation. Pupils are skilled in how they are able to vary their writing according to its purpose. In addition, many of the pupils have the skill to choose just the right word or phrase that gives their writing an added touch of quality. This has a very positive effect, for example, on the pupils' poetry work which is often quite thought provoking. Teaching assistants are very skilled at working alongside teachers, so that pupils who have special educational needs are able to join in the lesson and achieve well.
55. Very effective subject leadership displays both vision and commitment to developing and improving the subject. Assessment is thorough and regular and pupils' progress is monitored with targets that help pupils with their next step of learning. The co-ordinator is given sufficient time to monitor pupils' progress through a regular programme of evaluating teaching and learning. Improvements have also been made to ensuring that the marking of pupils' work is consistent in each of the classes. The quality of this is now good, ensuring that pupils have clear guidance on how to improve their work. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good as standards have improved in all aspects of English in Year 6, and teaching has been maintained as consistently good or better.

Literacy across the curriculum

56. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is good. Pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing are developed effectively in most subjects. There is also ample evidence of teachers using subjects such as art and design, history, geography, religious education, mathematics and design and technology to promote literacy skills. For example, the pupils in Year 6 have produced good quality persuasive writing to sell a pencil case they have designed and made in design and technology.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching and learning and the very effective revision arrangements are the main reasons why pupils achieve very well overall.
- Good improvements have been made to the quality of provision since the last inspection.
- The subject is led and managed well, but the co-ordinator's monitoring is made more difficult by the way pupils' work is recorded.
- Writing is still used too little in mathematics.

Commentary

57. As they did at the time of the last inspection, results in the national tests vary significantly due to variations in attainment on entry. Overall, the results attained by pupils in Year 2 over the last few years are below average. Inspection evidence shows that the pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to attain below average results compared with all schools and those operating in similar circumstances. However, given the low levels of attainment when children start at the school and the problems of poor concentration and behaviour that many have at that stage, this represents good achievement.
58. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is very good. The teachers in these year groups benefit from the very good work of their colleagues in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 in helping pupils to develop very positive attitudes to learning. Hard work by the staff and pupils has resulted in pupils attaining above average standards as shown overall by the results of the national tests taken in Year 6 over the last three years. Inspection findings indicate that the pupils currently in Year 6 are likely to attain above average results compared with all schools and those in similar circumstances. The variations in progress made by pupils in different classes noted in the last report have been addressed and pupils now achieve consistently well as they pass through the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
59. The weaknesses in planning the mathematics curriculum have been dealt with effectively since highlighted as a shortcoming at the time of the previous inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy guidelines are implemented very well, so that learning takes place progressively. The improvements to planning and the quality of teaching have resulted in pupils making good progress in using and applying mathematics, and pupils now have appropriate strategies for solving problems. These significant improvements, which include more effective teaching in Years 3 to 6, have resulted in the pupils currently in Year 6 making very good progress in relation to the standards they achieved at the end of Year 2.
60. Teaching has improved. It is now good overall, with a high proportion of very good lessons. The unsatisfactory teaching seen during the last inspection has been eradicated. The very good relationships between teachers and their classes result in high levels of pupil engagement with what is taught. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to learning are now very good throughout the school marking a further improvement since the last inspection. Teachers now plan effectively to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and computers are now used appropriately to help develop pupils' mathematical skills. As at the time of the last inspection, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their writing skills, for example, in explaining their

methods. Very effective teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the progress made by pupils, especially those with special educational needs.

61. The co-ordinator analyses attainment data, monitors standards and planning, and works well with her colleagues in order to bring about further improvements in provision. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievements. The co-ordinator also contributes to the monitoring of lessons. This is a further improvement since the last inspection. However, a shortcoming in provision lies in how pupils record their work. Much of this is on sheets of paper, a significant number of which are not dated. This can make it difficult to monitor the progress pupils are making.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop mathematical skills in other subjects, such as science. The lack of formally agreed plans for this process reduces its effectiveness. The school has identified this as an area for development.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy their science work and apply themselves well in lessons.
- Good use is made of themed weeks where science has a particular focus.
- Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they can in investigative work.
- The use of assessment data in planning learning for particular groups of pupils is under-used.

Commentary

63. The 2004 Year 2 teacher assessments showed that pupils' attainment was below the national average. The 2004 Year 6 national test results showed that pupils' attainment was average. The pupils' performance based on their prior attainment was good, suggesting that this group of pupils made good progress from Year 2 to the end of Year 6. The standards at the end of Year 6 have been consistent at an average level over recent years, and are at the same level as noted at the time of the previous inspection.
64. Inspection findings indicate that standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and average by the end of Year 6. Although the inspection findings closely reflect the 2004 national test results for pupils in both key stages, evidence points to pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieving satisfactorily. There is no difference in achievement between the boys and girls. While they make secure gains in their learning of different scientific themes and ideas, progress in their ability to undertake and follow their own lines of enquiry in their investigative work limits their overall achievement. Higher-attaining pupils in particular are capable of higher standards in this aspect of their learning.
65. As they get older, the pupils successfully build on and consolidate their learning of different scientific themes and concepts. Younger pupils learn all living creatures grow and thrive when they have food, warmth, water and shelter. By the time they leave the school, this knowledge and understanding has been successfully extended to pupils knowing how plants and animals procreate, and that many creatures are part of the natural food chain. While the school is giving increasing attention to developing the pupils' abilities to undertake investigations and develop the scientific vocabulary

normally associated with such work, in practice pupils' skills are more developed in some classes than in others. Too few of the higher-attaining pupils in Year 6, for example, demonstrate the skills of determining their own lines of enquiry in response to a given problem, deciding what resources may be needed, following it through and presenting their information in an informative way.

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, are well organised and often capture the pupils' interest well in how they introduce ideas at the start of lessons. Such approaches help to fire the pupils' enthusiasm and they are given equally good scope to work in groups and test out their ideas by discussing their thinking with their classmates. Teachers use questions well to check out the pupils' thinking and to help them to explain their ideas. Occasionally, teachers over-direct the pupils, and in some classes there is an over-dependence on the use of commercially prepared worksheets for pupils to write up the results of their investigations. This limits the scope for them to discover things for themselves. Pupils in all classes have very positive attitudes to learning, and make a good contribution to lessons. Pupils work collaboratively with one another on shared tasks, and are very supportive of their friends who have particular learning needs and who find some of the tasks challenging.
67. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. There is now a greater rigour in monitoring teachers' plans and in evaluating the quality of the pupils' work by regular analysis of their work. However, the monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator is somewhat irregular and this gives her few opportunities to view good practice and share this with her colleagues. In addition, while pupils' assessment results are analysed, the use of this is not sharp enough in terms of translating the data into the setting of more challenging work for those who can handle a greater degree of challenge.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for information and communication technology has improved greatly since the previous inspection.
- Pupils get good opportunities to develop their word-processing skills in different subjects of the curriculum.
- Older pupils are not confident in using spreadsheets in support of their learning.
- There is no whole school common system to assessing the pupils' progress.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the part that new technologies increasingly play in their daily lives.

Commentary

68. At the time of the previous inspection, Year 6 pupils reached standards that were below average. A shortage of resources and teachers lacking the subject knowledge and confidence in how to best incorporate the use of computers into their everyday teaching were given as the main reasons why pupils did not reach sufficiently high standards. The school has taken concerted action since then to improve the quality of pupils' learning in information and communication technology. A new computer suite and a rigorous programme of staff development have yielded positive results and helped to raise the status of the subject considerably. As a result, pupils now reach standards that are in line with the average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. All pupils,

including those with special educational needs who are fully included in all aspects of the teaching of information and communication technology, achieve well.

69. A key strength in pupils' achievement is the way in which they are encouraged and respond to the high expectations of teachers in using word-processing software. The pupils use this in many subjects such as in the construction of imaginative poetry work in Year 2 and in researching and writing up, in neat and well-constructed way, facts about the wives of Henry VIII in the upper part of the school. As a result, by the time they leave the school pupils know how to use the finer features of a word-processor to embellish the appearance of their work. Pupils are given sufficient scope to use the Internet and they explain well how information and communication technology is to be seen in a wider context. Older pupils appreciate that many everyday items in the home rely on micro chips that enable them to be programmed to perform particular functions and that credit cards are dependent on the same sort of technology. A weaker feature of pupils' achievement includes their understanding of how spreadsheets are used to extend their understanding of numeracy.
70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils learn well when being taught in the computer suite and understand the protocols of logging on and off a computer. Teachers provide sufficient opportunities for the pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects and activities to ensure this include pupils' using the Internet. Where classrooms have interactive whiteboards, these are used well to highlight teaching points and to show pupils the approaches they need to take in order to complete their work. There are, however, some missed opportunities by teachers to use computers in lessons and this impedes the overall pace of the pupils' learning. In addition, there is no whole school agreement on how best to record and monitor pupils' progress. As a result, teachers do not always have a sufficiently clear idea of where exactly pupils are in their learning in order to plan activities and tasks that would build on what they already know.
71. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only recently taken up the post and as such has had few opportunities to monitor directly the impact that teaching is having on learning. However, she does have plans in place that include increasing the number of interactive whiteboards so that all teachers can incorporate them in to their teaching.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. The school makes satisfactory use of information and communication technology to promote learning in other subjects. Increasing use is being made, for example, of digital cameras in art and design for the children to capture images, transfer them into appropriate software and manipulate them to obtain more pleasing effects. Pupils use the Internet well in history and geography to research themes and topics that help to enliven their learning in these subjects. There are, however, missed opportunities in lessons for teachers to allow the pupils greater use and access to the computers to help reinforce their learning such as writing up the results of their investigative work in science.

HUMANITIES

73. The inspection focused on **religious education** and **history**. **Geography** was not inspected in depth, and therefore no judgements can be made about the provision in this subject. However, the sampling of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that geography is taught for an appropriate amount of time and children learn about contrasting localities, rivers and of how people generally live their day-to-day lives in other countries. A good range of visits and activities enriches the pupils'

learning, and suitable use is made of the local area as a further means of enhancing learning. There is no whole school approach to monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress in the subject however.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- The good teaching has significant strengths.
- The headteacher has a positive effect on provision.

Commentary

74. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain standards in line with those laid out in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The weakness in pupils' knowledge of religions other than Christianity noted in the last report has been addressed well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least satisfactorily.
75. Teaching remains good in Years 3 to 6. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, but the scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that it is at least satisfactory. The good links that teachers forge with other subjects, the use of drama and the practical approach to teaching promote good levels of pupil interest in the subject. The scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that there is very good teaching about the life of Jesus in Year 4, and pupils achieve very well in this area of the curriculum. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills.
76. The personal interest taken in this subject by the headteacher gives it extra status and enhances the provision. Consequently, collective worship continues to make a very good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion as it did at the time of the last inspection. Links with local churches remain a strong feature of pupils' learning opportunities. The involvement of visitors, including the local clergy, adds a great deal of depth and interest to pupils' studies. Jain nuns recently came to school and made a memorable contribution to pupils' understanding of other religions, as did Muslim students from a nearby university. Work in religious education has a strong, positive effect on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
77. The leadership has changed recently and the headteacher currently acts as coordinator in a 'caretaking' capacity. Her monitoring of provision, including the discussions she holds with pupils, has a positive effect on standards. Very good learning resources significantly enhance learning.

History

The provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative teaching makes the subject interesting for pupils and, as a result they respond with enthusiasm.
- History makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy skills.
- Monitoring of the subject is infrequent and not sufficiently developed.
- Assessment is not consistent across the school.

Commentary

78. The school has maintained the standards of the last inspection in which pupils meet expectations for their ages in both Years 2 and 6. The school's lively approach to history is illustrated by a very good lesson in Year 5. In the lesson, the pupils developed their understanding of the way of life in ancient Egypt through devising a short drama as they arrived at the mouth of the Nile to settle in a new land. This put them in a position to see the past from the point of view of the ancient Egyptians and they responded to this challenge with enthusiasm. Such an approach helped pupils to work collaboratively and independently and helped the development of speaking and listening skills.
79. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and all groups of pupils are achieving well. Teaching seen during inspection was generally good. There is a clear focus on the teaching of skills of historical enquiry and pupils are encouraged to develop them from an early age. In a good lesson in Year 1, the pupils compared holidays now with those of fifty or a hundred years ago, using photographs and artefacts as evidence. There are some limitations when teaching does not ask pupils to give reasons for events in the past. For example, a satisfactory lesson, where the teacher did not encourage pupils to look closely at why the Romans wanted to invade England, was let down by weak questioning.
80. Literacy is promoted well through the subject. The work in Year 2 shows that pupils write a biography of Florence Nightingale or a diary in the style of Samuel Pepys, recording the events of the Great Fire of London. Year 6 pupils produce extended writing on Victorian times, the evacuees in the World War II and Britain since the 1930s. The subject is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and stimulating activities such as history recreation days when pupils dress up as characters and people in history.
81. Leadership and management as well as improvement in the subject are good although there are aspects of the subject which are that could be usefully developed further. There is, for example, no consistent approach to assessment in history across the school to raise standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not carried out often enough to improve the subject's performance.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

82. The inspection focused on art and design. Not enough information was gathered to make secure judgements about provision, standards, teaching and learning in design and technology, music and physical education. However, evidence from discussions with pupils and scrutiny of the work displayed around the school indicates that the subjects are taught regularly and to a sufficiently high standard in both key stages. Some of the design and technology work on display is of a good standard.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Art and design has high status in the school and the pupils achieve highly.
- The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Imaginative use is made of the works of different artists to stimulate pupils' learning.
- More use could be made of sketchbooks to demonstrate the extent of pupils' progress over time.

Commentary

83. At the end of both key stages, all pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve well. Standards are well above the national average, indicating good progress since the previous inspection when standards were average. There are many imaginative and attractive displays of pupils' work and this reflects the high status that the subject holds across the school.
84. By the age of seven, pupils demonstrate good skills in drawing, painting and in using a range of materials to construct three-dimensional work. They have used clay substitutes, for example, to create relief models of a seashore. By applying oil pastels to bring out the different textures and carefully applying paint, they added to the overall quality of their finished work. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6. This progress is aided by the variety of imaginative tasks they are given, using a wide range of media. Pupils make particularly good progress in their understanding of how different artists and craftspeople generate art using a variety of materials. By exploring the art of Aborigines, for example, the children learn how they use pattern and colour in their work. Pupils often take great care over their work, drawing flowers using pastels or paint often with a keen eye for detail. The school has not been slow to introduce to pupils and let them use new technologies in their understanding of art and design. Pupils are confident in taking digital photographs and then using a range of software to manipulate their images and then print out their efforts.
85. Teaching and learning are very good in both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding and appreciate well the contribution that the subject can make to both pupils' personal development and their learning in other subjects. Pupils are often given every opportunity to write poetry that sits alongside their displayed work and the quality of this is often imaginative. Lessons are effectively organised and those with particular learning needs are supported well in lessons enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates. High expectations of the pupils are very much in evidence and they respond well to this challenge by working hard and producing work that is of both a high quality and reflects their particular abilities. While pupils are given scope to produce initial sketches of how their work may develop, they do not get sufficient scope to make more comprehensive use of these. As a result, the pupils do not make sufficient progress in their understanding of the importance of using sketchbooks as a means of preparatory work.
86. There is good leadership and management of the subject and there has been good improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Of note has been the careful way in which the co-ordinator and her colleagues have developed the potential of other subjects to promote pupils' learning in art and design and vice-versa.

Personal, social and health education and citizenship

87. Only one lesson was seen and therefore it was not possible to make an overall judgement about standards and provision in the subject. A good programme of work covers the recommended strands of developing an awareness of citizenship, a healthy life style, confidence and responsibility and good relationships and respect for others. The subject makes a significant contribution to the school's very good provision for personal development. The good taught provision is supported by the school ethos and provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on choices they will have to make as individuals, and their role within the community of the class and the school. This is why behaviour, relationships, and the climate for learning are strengths of the school.

88. In the single lesson observed, teaching was very good. Year 5 pupils had been encouraged to hold an election in the style of the general election that took place across the country during the inspection. The pupils showed good understanding of democracy and the electoral procedures. The pupils who stood for the election campaigned for their chosen issues with eloquence.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3
<i>Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).</i>	