

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Dunmow Infant School**

Great Dunmow

LEA area : Essex

Unique Reference Number : 115298

Inspection Number: 187245

Headteacher : Mrs P Harrison

Reporting inspector : Mrs Esme Pickford  
23128

Dates of inspection : 13<sup>th</sup> –16<sup>th</sup> September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707332

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school :	Infant
Type of control :	Foundation
Age range of pupils :	4 to 7
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Rosemary Lane Great Dunmow Essex CM6 1DW
Telephone number :	(01371) 873184
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr Graham Albon
Date of previous inspection :	April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Esme Pickford, RgI	Mathematics	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Religious education	Leadership and management
	Areas of learning for children under five	
Ron Ibbitson, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Accommodation
Cheryl Thompson	English	Attainment and progress
	Music	Teaching
	Special educational needs	
Paul Story	Information technology	Curriculum and assessment
	History	Efficiency of the school
	Geography	
	Physical education	
Pat O'Brien	Science	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
	Design and technology	Staffing and learning resources
	Art	

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

The teaching is good in the majority of lessons and often very good for pupils in the nursery classes.

- The information the school provides for parents is excellent and parents give the school strong support.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Standards in reading are above average.
- Homework is used effectively.
- Pupils have good attitudes to work and behave well.
- Relationships in the school are good at all levels.
- The school's financial control and management are very good and it manages its resources efficiently.
- The school is a caring community and pupils benefit from good support, guidance and welfare provision.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support to staff and pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons.

### Where the school has weaknesses

The brighter pupils are not stretched.

- I. Insufficient use is made of assessment information to adjust the planning of lessons and make changes to the curriculum.
- II. Standards of handwriting and presentation of work are not high enough.
- III. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to write independently and develop their skills.

**The strengths outweigh the weaknesses, but the weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils in the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made sound progress since the last inspection in 1996. Academic standards have been maintained. All the key issues from the last report have been addressed. The school has worked very hard to improve links with parents and the information it now provides for them is excellent. The process of development planning has been much improved through an extensive consultative process involving all sectors of the school community and is central to the school's development. Governors have monitored the implementation and effectiveness of the various tasks identified in the plan and considered the cost effectiveness of their major spending decisions. The school acknowledges that it has made less progress in developing provision for higher attaining pupils, and has once again prioritised this issue. There is still under-achievement for this group of pupils particularly in mathematics, science and writing and the changes in provision so far have not addressed this.

## Standards in subjects

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
			<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E
Reading	B	B		
Writing	C	C		
Mathematics	C	C		

Since the last inspection, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests, at the end of Key Stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics have remained around the national average. From 1997, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) in reading has been above the national average, but in writing it is more often below. In science, results of National Curriculum teacher assessment over the years 1996 to 1998 have remained around the national average but were below average in 1998. When compared to similar schools, results of 1998 National Curriculum tests show that standards in reading are above the average; in writing and mathematics standards are broadly in line with the average for similar schools, whilst in science, standards are well below with only a minority achieving the higher grade (Level 3).

Results of 1999 National Curriculum tests show standards in reading are above average and in writing, mathematics and science have again remained broadly in line with national averages. Compared to the 1998 results in science, there is a small increase in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level but an improvement in those achieving the higher level. 1999 science results are close to the national average rather than just below as they were last year. Comparative data for similar schools is currently unavailable.

Attainment in information technology is broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in religious education match those expected in the locally agreed syllabus by the age of seven.

## Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science		Satisfactory
Information technology		Good
Religious education		Satisfactory
Other subjects	Good	Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. 98 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better. 66 per cent of the teaching is either good or very good and 32 per cent is satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one lesson observed. The quality of teaching observed in the newly introduced Numeracy lessons was good and is already accelerating pupils' progress. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed and make a significant contribution to the standards achieved.

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor;*

very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

### Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons, move around the school sensibly and take care on the stairs. They behave well in the playground.
Attendance	Good. Pupils attend regularly, arrive punctually and lessons begin on time.
Ethos*	Good. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work and relationships within the school are good. The school is a very caring community. Satisfactory academic standards have been maintained but there is the potential for more able pupils to achieve higher standards.
Leadership and management	Good. Strong leadership is provided by the headteacher and governors, who manage the school well.
Curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum and gives sufficient emphasis to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The school does not make sufficient use of the assessments made to make changes to the curriculum.
Pupils with special educational needs	There is very good provision, teaching and support for these pupils to ensure that they make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Overall provision is good. There have been improvements in the provision for pupils' spiritual development since the last inspection.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The number, qualifications and range of experience of teaching staff is good. Nursery nurses and teaching assistants are a strength of the school. Accommodation is clean, bright and stimulating. The swimming pool contributes significantly to pupils' attainment in physical education. Resources are adequate, overall, to meet the demands of the curriculum.
Value for money	Satisfactory.

\* Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.

### The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
IV. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and are kept well informed.	IX. Work is often not challenging enough for
V. There are weekly opportunities to look at work and meet staff and they are approachable when problems arise.	X. Changes in teaching staff during the
VI. Pupils are encouraged to be polite and behave well.	XI. The lack of religious content in
VII. The school develops pupils' independence and self-esteem.	
VIII. Pupils enjoy school.	

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views that parents have of the school. Inspectors find that many brighter pupils are not being sufficiently extended. The school also recognises this and has plans to improve provision during the school year. There have been changes in teaching staff during the last year following a long period of stability. These are in no way excessive and vacancies have been promptly filled. The legal requirements for collective worship are being met.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

**To improve the quality of education and raise standards, the headteacher, governing body and staff should improve the provision for higher attaining pupils by:**

- clearly identifying these pupils within each class;
- setting consistently higher expectations for the quantity and quality of the work they produce;
- detailing in the planning of English, mathematics and science lessons activities to extend and challenge these pupils; and
- setting targets and monitoring progress.

(Paragraphs 25, 50, 53, 63, 111, 119.)

**To improve standards in writing and presentation the school should place greater emphasis on teaching:**

- the correct pencil grip to the youngest pupils;
- correct formation and proportion of letters;
- a more systematic, cumulative and effective method of learning basic letter sounds to help pupils spell; and
- and provide considerably more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop these skills in their independent writing, in all areas of the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 12, 19, 35, 108, 110, 124, 161.)

**To take the school forward, the headteacher, governing body and staff should make full use of the information gathered from assessment to:**

- provide more detailed information about pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy when they move from the nursery to the reception class;
- adjust day-to-day lesson planning to meet the needs of all pupils by building on what pupils already know, understand and can do; and
- evaluate how curriculum planning and methods of teaching need to be adjusted in order to raise standards in areas targeted for improvement.

(Paragraphs 34, 39, 56.)

**In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:**

- ensure that the school's marking policy is consistently applied; and
- check that all subjects receive their planned allocation of teaching time.

## INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the school

1. Great Dunmow Infant School is situated to the west of Dunmow town centre and is the only infant school in the area. The school serves the families of Dunmow and the outlying villages of Barnston and Little Canfield. Some children attend from Stebbing, Great Easton and The Rodings, which are outside the catchment area. Building development in the town has caused an increase in pupil numbers. There are plans to restructure primary school provision in the area to cope with the influx of pupils and the school is to become a primary school on a new site. At present, all pupils transfer to Dunmow Junior School which is situated close to the school.
2. The 271 pupils come from a variety of backgrounds and live in private, council and housing association properties. Some parents commute to London, others work locally and most are keen to be involved in their children's education. The school is organised in ten classes. There is an equal number of boys and girls. Six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. There are 0.3 per cent of pupils from ethnic minority families and 0.3 per cent speak English as an additional language. Nine per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational need; this is below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry to the school at age four is generally typical of the national level expected for children of this age. During the inspection, which was held very early in the school year, there were 37 children under five attending the two nursery classes on a part-time basis, the youngest in the age group. The 51 older children under five attend full-time in the two reception classes. In the Spring term, three reception classes will be created to accommodate the 90 children. Three teaching staff were new to the school and had been in post for only a week prior to the inspection. The school has recently changed its status from Grant Maintained to a Foundation school.
3. The original building dates back to Victorian times but has been modified and remodelled over the years to provide additional classroom accommodation, a library and a computer room. The school is set in attractive mature grounds containing hard play areas, adventure playgrounds, a swimming pool, an environmental resource and a grassed play area.
4. The school has a variety of aims to provide pupils with a happy, caring and consistent learning environment which can help them achieve their full potential. Currently the school's main priority is to implement the National Numeracy strategy and review the provision for mathematics. The school will be bringing the new information technology suite into use during the term.

5. Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	44	42	86

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils At NC Level 2 or above	Boys	34	36	38
	Girls	35	36	36
	Total	69	72	74
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	80 (72)	84 (77)	86 (77)
	National	80 (80)	81 (80)	84 (84)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils At NC Level 2 or above	Boys	36	36	35
	Girls	34	37	35
	Total	70	73	70
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	81 (81)	85 (81)	81 (83)
	National	81 (80)	85 (84)	86 (85)

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1

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.3
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.0
	National comparative data	0.5

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	1
Permanent	0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	11
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

6. National performance data for the years 1996 to 1998 which uses pupils' average scores and compares them with national averages indicate that at the end of Key Stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics standards have remained around the national average. From 1997, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) in reading has been higher than the national average but in writing, it is more often below. The data show that girls do slightly better than boys in reading and writing. In mathematics, boys and girls do equally well. In science, results of National Curriculum teacher assessments over the years 1996 to 1997 have remained around the national average but were below in 1998.
7. When compared to similar schools, results of 1998 National Curriculum tests show that standards in reading are above the average; in writing and mathematics standards are broadly in line with the average for similar schools, whilst, in science, standards are well below.
8. Results of 1999 National Curriculum tests show that standards in reading are above the national average and in writing, mathematics and science have again remained broadly in line with national averages. Compared to 1998 results in science, there is a small increase in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level so that results are close to the national average rather than below, as they were last year.
9. When children start school at age four, their attainment is generally in line with that expected for their age. By the time they reach statutory school age, most children have reached the national desirable outcomes for learning in all areas and some are making a good start on the National Curriculum programmes of study. The majority of children attain the desirable outcomes in language and literacy and mathematics by the age of five.
10. Inspection evidence shows that in reading, at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils achieving levels higher than expected for their age is above average. Many Year 2 pupils read accurately and fluently for their age. They use several strategies to help them read unknown words such as picture clues or reading on and guessing the word from the meaning of the sentence. Their use of 'sounding out' words is not as well developed. Lower attaining readers have positive attitudes to reading and have good self-esteem.
11. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are in line with national expectations. Pupils are confident in expressing their views and explaining their work to their class. However, the talents of the higher attaining pupils are under-developed as they are not always encouraged to improve their skill in talking to an audience.
12. In writing, inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with national expectations with regard to content and punctuation. However, standards of handwriting are below those expected. Pupils' letter formation is inconsistent. Throughout, there is an over-reliance on learning to read and spell words by learning the word as a whole. This method is appropriate when the words are irregular such as 'when' and 'said', but pupils are not encouraged to use their knowledge of letter sounds (phonics) to attempt to spell words they are not sure of. As a result, pupils' independent writing is somewhat restricted; they tend to write using only words they can remember how to spell, rather than using the words they want.
13. In mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in number work and shape and space are in

line with national expectations. Pupils can count sets of objects accurately and count in twos, fives and tens up to 100. They identify odd and even numbers and recognise and continue sequences of number. Pupils can recognise, name and tessellate two-dimensional shapes and can name some common three-dimensional shapes. Little evidence was gained during the inspection about pupils' knowledge and understanding of data handling, using and applying mathematics and measuring. The reason for this is because the whole school is implementing the numeracy framework as prescribed in the National Numeracy Strategy and the focus in the sessions observed was predominantly number.

14. In science, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards are in line with national expectations with a particular strength in observational skills. Pupils can name significant parts of plants and animals accurately. The improvements in attainment in science are due to the changes to the scheme of work which is assisting progression of learning.
15. At the end of Key Stage 1, in religious education, pupils are attaining standards in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus 'Open Worlds'. Pupils understand the main Christian festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils can relate the story of Noah's ark to their work on caring for the environment.
16. Pupils are attaining the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 1 in information technology. In the whole class lessons observed, pupils can confidently access information about Queen Victoria from a CD ROM. However, when working with computers unaided, pupils are consolidating their skills rather than extending them. In nearly all Year groups, pupils use headphones and story tapes to advantage.
17. Overall standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 and the school is already achieving the target set for 2001.
18. Overall, progress is sound. In nearly all subjects, progress is good in relation to the targets set on their individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils who learn English as an additional language. These pupils are very well supported with suitable work and help. Special attention is given to ensuring that pupils for whom English is an additional language are taught the specific vocabulary that they will need for a particular subject. Individual education plans (IEPs) are very carefully matched to the needs of pupils and implemented thoroughly. Parents are encouraged to be as involved in helping their child meet the targets in their IEP as they feel able. In nearly all subjects, progress is unsatisfactory for higher attaining pupils because teachers do not expect enough of them and do not consistently provide them with stimulating work to extend their thinking and/or move them on in their learning at a faster rate.
19. In reading, pupils make good progress. Nearly all parents hear their child read at home very regularly. The school values the important part that parents play in ensuring this good progress. Nearly all pupils start school with very positive attitudes towards books and have high expectations of enjoyment from reading. They soon learn to use picture clues to help them guess the content of the stories they share. As they move into Key Stage 1, pupils learn to read and spell 'key words' by sight. The good progress they make in this area is promoted by a high level of parental involvement. In speaking and listening, most pupils make satisfactory progress. They are confident enough to share their work in plenary sessions but teachers do not always ensure that pupils make themselves heard. Higher attaining pupils are not encouraged to take account of their audience and improve their performance. In writing, pupils make sound progress in developing their ideas and recording these in order. In Year 2, pupils are beginning to use full stops and capital letters appropriately. However, progress in learning correct pencil grip, correct letter formation and the proportion of letters is unsatisfactory throughout. For

example, in one Year 2 class, over half the pupils have an inappropriate pencil grip which makes it very difficult for them to develop a neat, fluent, legible and reasonably quick style of writing. Insufficient emphasis is given to ensuring that these basic skills are taught thoroughly and that pupils are given adequate time to practise, consolidate and refine these skills.

20. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory. Good emphasis is put on mental mathematics and as a result pupils make sound progress in developing their mental skills; younger pupils understand and use mathematical terms confidently such as 'one more' or 'one less' and respond quickly to their teachers' questions. Higher attaining pupils in Year 1 can easily relate their understanding of double numbers, such as double six being 12, to solving the near double of five add six. However, teachers do not set sufficiently challenging work for these pupils to develop their thinking and move them on in their learning; consequently higher attaining pupils do not make the progress they should. Year 2 pupils can count on and back in tens from different starting points.
21. In science, progress is satisfactory. Pupils' practical and investigational skills develop satisfactorily as they move from Year group to Year group. Progress is good in developing observational skills because teachers make good use of the school's environmental area to encourage pupils to observe, compare and record their findings. Pupils make appropriate use of scientific vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils generally make unsatisfactory progress because there is insufficient emphasis placed on providing them with extension work to take them beyond that achieved by the majority.
22. In religious education, progress is satisfactory. Pupils develop an appropriate awareness and understanding of faiths other than Christianity and are beginning to understand some connections between the festivals of different faiths. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can respond to moral issues such as taking care of the environment and the effect of pollution.
23. In information technology, pupils make good progress in lessons where skills are directly taught but less progress outside these sessions. Currently computers are not used to full advantage to support other curriculum areas due to the lack of suitable software. The school is awaiting the delivery of supplies to address this.
24. In the foundation subjects of geography, history and physical education, pupils, generally, make satisfactory progress and reach levels expected for their age. In art, pupils make good progress due to teachers' good subject knowledge. Pupils exceed the expected standards in swimming as a result of the very good opportunities offered by the school's facilities. In music and design technology there was insufficient inspection evidence to make a judgement on progress.
25. A key issue of the last inspection was 'to continue to develop the provision to meet the needs of the more able pupils'. The school has not been successful in meeting this key issue. It therefore, remains an area for improvement.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

26. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are good. The school has maintained its standards of good behaviour mentioned in the report of the last inspection.
27. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes towards their learning. From the time they start they are well motivated and set about their work with enthusiasm. They are able to sustain an interest in their work and take a pride in its completion. In the nursery, a child making a picture of an apple was too busy in her work to reply to questions and carried on until the picture was completed to her satisfaction.

28. Pupils under five in the nursery and reception classes settle quickly into school routines and are developing good attitudes to learning. They persevere even when finding work difficult and stay on task. Their behaviour is good and they relate well to each other. They are encouraged to become independent learners and they tidy away their own resources. This has a positive effect on their development.
29. Throughout the school and nursery, pupils' behaviour is good. They know the school rules and the class rules, both of which they helped to make. At the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions and following breaks, pupils come into class in an orderly manner and settle down quickly to their work. In the playground, children play well together, with boys and girls of different ages mixing freely together. Children are aware that aggressive or racial behaviour is wrong and will be dealt with promptly and firmly by the school. During the last school year there was one case of a fixed exclusion for inappropriate behaviour.
30. Throughout the school, relationships are good. Relationships between pupils and with teaching staff are good. In and around the school, pupils are friendly and show consideration to one another. Reception and Year 1 pupils quickly get to know the other pupils in their new classes.
31. The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages know that they are expected to behave responsibly. All show responsibility in looking after their own possessions and in helping to tidy away after activities. Class helpers are selected each day for special responsibilities, such as taking registers back to the office after registration. Pupils accept these responsibilities with pride and, as well as increasing their self-confidence, they set standards for other pupils to follow.

### **Attendance**

32. Attendance is good. Pupils arrive punctually for school and lessons begin on time. The school has a good attendance record which is above the national average and shows an improvement since the last inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

33. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. Fifty five per cent of the teaching is good and 11 per cent very good. Thirty two per cent is satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one lesson observed. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by not teaching to the clear learning objectives in the lesson plan. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they are clearly capable of. A strength of the teaching is the very good deployment of the proficient teachers assistants who make a significant contribution to the standards achieved in the school.
34. Teaching for the youngest children under five in the nursery is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the needs of this age group. A strong emphasis is placed on providing activities for children to make choices, develop independence and learn routines. Children make very good progress in their personal development because teachers set very high expectations in areas such as clearing up and tidying away and settling to listen to stories. Planning is very good. Planning takes very good account of the nationally determined desirable learning outcomes. Assessment is good. Children's progress is carefully noted and this information is used to plan the next sessions. The record keeping system for passing information on to the reception class teachers is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient detail in the records to help the reception

teachers to plan their work in order to move the children on in their learning. For example, there is no record of the letter sounds the children know and can use and no record of their understanding of counting and ordering numbers. Relationships with parents are very good. Teachers encourage parents to be involved as much as possible in their child's learning.

35. Teaching for children under five in the reception classes is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and, generally, a good understanding of how to teach early literacy and numeracy skills. However, teachers have insufficient understanding of how to teach letter sounds in the most efficient manner to help their pupils learn to spell and read new words. The use of assessment is satisfactory.
36. At Key Stage 1, teaching is generally good. All teachers have good subject knowledge in all areas of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The exception to this is in information technology where teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory but they lack confidence in using some of the newer software programs and some of the newly acquired computers. The school has recognised this as an area for development. Teachers generally have a good understanding of how to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills in a meaningful and enjoyable manner. In literacy, teachers make very good use of 'word walls' to help their pupils to learn to read and spell common but irregular words such as 'the' and 'said'. Parents are very involved in their children's learning of these words. However, the use of letter sound (phonic) strategies to help pupils spell and read is under-developed. Pupils do not make the progress they could in writing, if the use of letter sounds was promoted as strongly as learning words just by recognising and remembering the whole word, as they do in their 'word walls'. All teachers organise their Literacy Hour sessions well. Transition from the whole class part of the lesson to the group work is smooth and no time is wasted. In numeracy, teachers make good use of a variety of games to promote enjoyment in mathematics and develop pupils' thinking and ability to perform quick mental calculations. Teachers structure their lessons according to the prescribed framework in the National Numeracy Strategy and organise their group work effectively. Particularly good use is made of proficient teachers assistants in the group work part of the lessons. Their involvement in group work ensures that pupils apply themselves to their tasks and make sound progress. In science, teachers have sound subject knowledge and pay good attention to safety. In history and geography, teachers have a good understanding of how to teach the skills associated with the subjects such as mapping skills for geography and enquiry skills for history. In physical education, teachers make good use of pupils to demonstrate techniques and skills. In religious education, teachers make good use of resources, such as puppets, to encourage pupils to reflect on the effect of their behaviour on others.
37. All teachers use questioning effectively. For example, in science, pupils are asked to name appliances which need electricity to make them function; in history, pupils are encouraged to compare their life style with those of Victorian children. In mathematics, teachers use questioning very effectively to check on pupils' understanding and extend their thinking.
38. All teachers set high expectations for behaviour. However, teachers do not set high enough expectations for the pace or quality of work of higher attaining pupils in their classes. Consequently, many do not make the progress they are quite clearly capable of. This lack of sufficiently high expectations is related to the assessment teachers make of pupils' work. Teachers collect samples of pupils' work and mark their work. However, they do not use the information they gain from questioning and looking at pupils' work to plan subsequent work to extend pupils and move them on at a pace suitable to their attainment.
39. Planning is good. The best daily planning contains clear statements of what it is that teachers expect pupils to know by the end of the lesson, takes account of what pupils have learned in

previous lessons and contains extension activities for higher attaining pupils. Literacy and numeracy lessons are planned very carefully and very good use is made of teachers assistants in the group work part of lessons. This helps to ensure that pupils get on with their work and make sound progress. Teachers generally give good feedback to pupils about the work they are doing and make suggestions as to how they might improve. Teachers' use of day to day assessment of pupils' learning is currently unsatisfactory. The quality of marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In some classes, work is marked thoroughly with comments written for the older pupils suggesting what they need to do to improve. In other classes, work is just ticked. Recent changes in assessment systems have yet to establish themselves. Currently the school does not have a useful and easily managed system in place for making assessments of what pupils have learned in lessons or need more time to consolidate. The lack of such a system means that, for some pupils, the content of the lesson is not at the right level to move them on in their learning. This is particularly so in the case of higher attaining pupils.

40. All teachers use a variety of teaching methods, including whole-class and group work. They give clear introductions to their lessons followed by well organised and resourced group work. The pace of lessons is, generally, good. However, in lessons that follow physical education (PE) the pace is sometimes too fast. This is because teachers try to make up the time lost in changing from PE. For example in a music lesson, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to practise their ability to copy rhythm patterns in order to be secure in their understanding; in religious education, pupils did not have enough time to finish off the planned work and did not have the opportunity to consolidate their learning.
41. Resources for lessons are always well prepared, appropriate and used to advantage. For example, Year 1 teachers make very good use of well illustrated books they had made to promote pupils' rhyming skills.
42. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans (IEPs) are very well written and implemented. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides very good advice for class teachers and helps them plan very suitable work for the pupils. There is very good liaison between class teachers, teachers assistants and the special education needs co-ordinator. This liaison ensures that pupils' successes or failures are quickly noted so that pupils can be moved on in their learning or given more opportunities to practise skills they are unsure of. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides very good teaching for the lower attaining groups during the Literacy Hour group work session. Teachers assistants also provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs during the Literacy Hour and Numeracy lesson group activities.
43. Throughout, relationships are good. Even at the start of a new school year, teachers have already formed good relationships with their new class. Teachers use praise appropriately and encourage pupils to take responsibility and show initiative.
44. Homework is used very effectively. The introduction of the new home/school activity book is an excellent system and is beginning to be used very well. Pupils read at home on a regular basis and learn to read and spell groups of words on 'word walls'. For history, pupils are encouraged to complete a 'time line' of major events in their lives. The standards attained in reading are a reflection of the strong parental involvement.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

45. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, although, following recent national initiatives in English and mathematics, the school's timetable has been adjusted to focus more on these

subjects. A satisfactory balance between all subjects has been maintained. Throughout the school, the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, religious education and the education of children under five. These findings are broadly the same as those of the last inspection.

46. The curriculum for children under five is well planned. The nationally recommended areas of learning are used as its basis followed by a well-planned transition to the early stages of the National Curriculum.
47. Within Years 1 and 2, pupils follow the subjects of the national curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Each term, subjects other than English and mathematics are loosely linked through an agreed topic focus. Parents are advised of the topic and copies of the outline plan are displayed in classrooms. The amount of time available for some lessons, notably physical education, religious education and music is frequently reduced from the planned allocation. This occurs because of time lost as pupils change before and after physical education and walk to and from the hall.
48. Sound provision is made for pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. Through investigations in mathematics and science, they develop powers of reasoning and deduction, as, for example, when they investigate number patterns in the roll of dice or consider the habitats of mini beasts. Pupils are successfully encouraged to refine and control body movements in physical education. They develop a sense of their locality through their studies of the school and its environs in geography. As in history, they consider the passing of time and the way Dunmow and the surrounding area have changed. They place this in the context of their own lives. Through the celebration of festivals, they learn about other religions and cultures, whilst, by emulating the style of famous artists such as Monet and Brueghel and playing musical instruments, they develop their creative skills and their visual and aural perception. Social and personal development are also encouraged as pupils take responsibility for setting out and clearing away equipment and materials and when they work together on tasks such as using the computer. They learn about aspects of growing up and the effects of exercise on their bodies as well as the need for care in the use of drugs and medicines.
49. Before children enter the nursery, they will have visited the school on several occasions both with their playgroup to attend concerts or view the nursery facilities and with their parents. This ensures a smooth entry to the first stages of schooling. The transition from year to year is similarly well managed, as is that of Year 2 pupils to the junior school. The transfer of satisfactory information at all stages supports these arrangements. Prior to transition, Year 2 pupils visit the Junior school on a number of occasions and the Year 3 teachers visit and meet the pupils and their teachers to further support this. Satisfactory information about pupils' attainment and personal development, including full records of pupils' special educational needs, is sent to new schools.
50. Equality of access and opportunity is good for children under five. It is good throughout the school in terms of ethnicity and gender and in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, provision for more able pupils in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory. Although there is ability grouping in numeracy and literacy sessions, extension activities are not available for the higher attaining. In the other subjects of the curriculum pupils largely complete the same tasks and there are no activities specifically designed to challenge the higher attaining. This was found to be an area of concern in the last inspection and the school is aware that it needs to be addressed.
51. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) are very clear and appropriate. A particular strength

of the school is the knowledgeable support given by teachers assistants. This support ensures that pupils with special educational needs work successfully on similar work to their classmates and have good self-esteem. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported. Particular attention is given to ensuring that pupils understand and use correctly the special vocabulary used in mathematics and science.

52. The school has worked hard to revise its three yearly schemes of work since the last inspection and to update them in the light of recent national guidance. Overall, they provide sound guidance as to the development and progression of pupils' skills and understanding, outline suitable activities to support this and ensure continuity throughout the school. The National Literacy Strategy has been adopted for English and the National Numeracy Strategy for mathematics. Although the school has adopted the recommended allocation of time for numeracy and literacy, there is no guidance on the allocation of time to other subject areas to ensure balance and coverage.
53. Working from the schemes of work, teachers plan their half-termly units collaboratively within their year groups. They are well supported in this by allocations of non-contact time and by consultation with the subject co-ordinators. Through year group meetings, class teachers develop their own daily plans from the longer term overviews and actively involve teachers assistants to ensure continuity of support for pupils. The plans generally identify the learning objectives for the lessons and list the activities and resources that will be used to achieve them. Whilst most teachers plan suitable levels of work for the majority of pupils that are well matched to the National Curriculum levels of attainment, they do not include extension activities for the higher attainers.
54. Good use is made of a programme of visits to enrich and support the curriculum. In geography, pupils make extensive studies of the local area and visit Walton. They visit Hatfield Forest for environmental science and Hedingham Castle and Braintree museum for history. As is common in most infant schools, there are no extra curricular activities.
55. Overall, arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are good for pupils under five and satisfactory for pupils in Key Stage 1. Since the last inspection, the school has made progress in unifying and standardising its assessment arrangements. Within the nursery, good, detailed records of what children can do in relation to the different areas of learning are regularly maintained by the teachers and nursery nurses. However, insufficient detail about attainment in literacy and mathematics is passed on to the reception teachers so that they can plan work to move children on in their learning. Baseline assessment on entry to reception is followed by a comprehensive programme of recording and assessing pupils' ability in English, mathematics and science through teacher assessments and the use of standardised tests. This has very recently been reviewed to ensure that it provides detail of how pupils' understanding and skills are progressing and the levels of attainment they are achieving. The new system of recording assessments has yet to establish itself and be of use. Within the other subjects, assessment is now largely based on recording completion of the task and noting extremes of performance. Good use is made of diagnostic tests to identify the specific problems of pupils with special educational needs. Teacher assessments made at the end of Key Stage 1 often under-estimate pupils' performance in the tests and the school is working to address this. Marking of pupils' work is usually undertaken within lessons and often there is no record of what was said or how the work could be improved. Annual reports to parents helpfully provide detail of coverage separately from pupils' achievement and set general targets for improvement. Those for Year 2 pupils relate their attainment to National Curriculum levels.
56. However, use is not made of the outcomes of assessment information to modify curriculum plans and this is unsatisfactory. Although trends in performance in the end of Key Stage 1 results are

reviewed, the school has not used this information to identify weaknesses in its planning nor considered how these could be or addressed. Similarly, the data obtained from teacher observations and assessments, the baseline assessment and standardised tests are analysed to identify areas of concern but insufficiently used to inform and modify curriculum delivery. Recent changes to the previous, fragmentary assessment system have yet to establish themselves and this further prevents teachers from making use of assessment information to develop long and medium term plans, which will promote the raising of standards of attainment further throughout the school.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

57. The positive ethos of the school is evident in the good provision provided for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness through quiet reflection on the theme in the daily act of worship. Following a period of reflection in one assembly, some pupils were willing to share their 'memorable moments' with the rest of the school. In lessons, pupils are given some opportunities to think about ideas and issues which affect them personally, such as being kind and caring for living things. Spiritual insight occurs in religious education and literacy lessons where pupils explore the feelings and emotions of characters in a story and relate this to themselves. In an art lesson, pupils looked at a Monet painting and could describe how it made them feel. Pupils in one class showed awe and wonder when listening to a tape of 'whale song' which the teacher had brought back from holiday. In the nursery class, pupils expressed some awe when they used a magnifying glass for the first time to observe fruits. Opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on the spiritual aspects of the world around them have improved since the last inspection.
58. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are taught care and respect for each other, as well as respect for the world, personal possessions and property. Teachers encourage courtesy, consideration and self respect among pupils by example. Pupils behave well and comply with the simple rules which they agree for their own classrooms, the playground and around the school. They have a good sense of right and wrong. All adults make good use of praise, value pupils' ideas and celebrate and reward achievement.
59. The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. Relationships between pupils and with other members of the school community are good. The school promotes in all pupils the qualities of caring, respect for others and self-discipline. In lessons, pupils work co-operatively in small groups of mixed gender sharing ideas and equipment and communicating effectively with each other. Pupils of all ages are given good opportunities to develop the social skills and personal qualities necessary for sharing and taking responsibility for classroom tasks. From the earliest days in the nursery class, children are expected to be responsible and independent. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well integrated into the school community. Pupils are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves and raise money for charities and distribute Harvest produce to the elderly. Educational visits and the visitors who come into school to help pupils with their work all contribute positively to pupils' social education.
60. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, overall. The opportunities provided for pupils to learn about their own culture are good. Through the curriculum, pupils are given a variety of valuable cultural experiences in their study of art, music, geography and history. In history, Year 2 classes are learning about life in Victorian times and will have a 'Victorian classroom experience' when they visit a local museum shortly. Pupils also visit a castle to learn about life long ago. In geography, pupils visit the town and study the important buildings, including the parish church. Pupils are provided with some opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own. In religious education, pupils learn about the Jewish and

Hindu religions. A Jewish visitor has been into school to speak to pupils about her faith and a Hindu storyteller is to visit the school during book week. Pupils also learn about other cultures through a study of festivals such as Divali and the Chinese New Year.

61. Assemblies are well planned and attended by staff and all pupils. They are led by several members of staff, class groups and a member of the local clergy. From the records of the collective acts of worship held in the previous school year the focus is mainly Christian, although stories and festivals from other religions also feature. The assemblies observed provided good opportunities for developing a sense of community, celebrating achievement and maintaining the ethos of the school. The school has made changes to the pattern and timings of assemblies this term to improve the quality of the experience, but it is too early to judge the effect of this.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

62. Overall, the school's provision for pupils' support, welfare and guidance is good and makes a positive contribution to their learning. Parents speak highly of the self-confidence which the school instils in pupils and they report that pupils have pride in their school. There are very effective arrangements for the induction of new children to the school and to ensure a smooth transfer to the junior school.
63. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Staff know pupils well and use this knowledge to provide support on a daily basis. Staff keep informal notes to assist in the monitoring of personal development. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are sound. Academic progress is monitored by records of achievement which include examples of pupils' work, records and the results of testing. Insufficient use is made of the available information to monitor the progress of the higher attaining pupils. The progress of pupils with special needs is carefully monitored through the progress they make towards the targets in their individual education plans. The school has access to and makes good use of outside agencies to support pupils.
64. The school's procedures for promoting discipline and managing behaviour are good. The school promotes self-discipline and this is re-enforced by the behaviour and discipline policy, which clearly identifies what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. The Code of Conduct for the school and playground is clearly displayed. Each class devises and displays its own rules and pupils are aware of the standards expected. There is no formal anti-bullying policy, but staff are very aware of any incidents of inappropriate behaviour and pupils say that staff always take action when informed of any issues.
65. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and contribute to the high standards achieved. There is a clear attendance policy which staff implement consistently. Unauthorised absence is always correctly identified by the school.
66. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are good. The named person for child protection and staff have had the appropriate training and the policy is structured and complies with current legislation. There is a code of conduct for visiting speakers to the school. Many subject policies highlight safety issues, such as in science where the pond rules are stated. There is clear guidance for staff concerning the safety and supervision of pupils and for effective lunch time supervision. There are regular risk assessments of the school buildings and grounds. First aid provision, procedures for the administration of medicines and dealing with accidents are very good. Staff ensure that pupils arrive and leave the site safely. The good standards of support and guidance have been maintained since the last inspection.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

67. The school's very good partnership with parents and the community enriches the life of the school and has a direct bearing on supporting pupils' learning.
68. Since the last inspection, the school has made great efforts to improve the information given to parents and it is now excellent. Information is provided by regular informative newsletters and reports to parents, through parents' evenings each term and through opportunities at other times to talk with the head and class teachers. There is also an 'Open Door' arrangement that provides an opportunity for parents to visit the school on Thursday afternoons to see their children's classrooms and their displayed work. The school solicits parents' opinions through questionnaires, such as their views on the Literacy Hour, to which 175 parents responded. The recently introduced 'home/school' activities book together with an explanatory booklet enables parents to see what work their children are doing and provides ways of helping them at home.
69. Results of the OFSTED parental questionnaire indicated that the great majority of those parents who replied felt they were encouraged to participate in the life of the school and many parents do come into school regularly to help. The school appreciates offers of help and the headteacher holds preliminary meetings to discuss ways in which parents can be used to assist children's learning.
70. There is an active association of parents who freely give of their time to organise fund raising events on behalf of the school. The association has enabled the school to make some substantial purchases such as contributions to the upkeep of the swimming pool. The association also provides opportunities for parents and children to enjoy several social events, the main one being the annual summer fete.
71. Curriculum work is supported by visits to places of interest such as museums and churches. Visits have taken place over the school year to a local church where the arrangements for public worship were explained; to a museum to support studies in the Victorian period; to Hatfield Forest where reception children carried out pond dipping; and to another town for comparative work in geography. Various visitors to the school, some of whom participate in collective worship, enhance pupils' knowledge of the world. The school carefully evaluates visits and visitors to ensure that children's learning benefits from these outside contacts.
72. Pupils are encouraged to help others who are less fortunate than themselves through the support of charities. Children dressed as clowns on 'red nose day' and raised money for the charity Comic Relief. Following the harvest festival celebrations, the school gave the proceeds to needy old people in the area.
73. The school has good contacts with local play groups. Children from several groups came into the school to see the Christmas Concert and pupils from Years 1 and 2 acted as hosts and partnered the young children round the school. Interviews with parents showed that they were all pleased with the arrangements made for their children to enter nursery.
74. The school has a good relationship with the receiving junior school. Joint meetings of teachers are arranged for discussion and there are also meetings of the senior management teams. Year 2 children have an induction programme and visit the junior school for two sessions to spend time with their new teacher. Staff from the two schools also meet to discuss pupils with special educational needs who will be moving up to the junior school. By these means, a smooth transfer between the two stages of education is assured.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

## Leadership and management

75. The overall leadership and management within the school are good. The headteacher is an effective leader and strongly influences the conduct and the ethos of the school for the good. As well as organising the school efficiently and representing it in the community, she teaches regularly and knows the pupils well. The headteacher has earned the respect of the governors, the staff team and parents for her professionalism and dedication.
76. The governors have a clear view of the school's needs, are well informed on school issues and effectively fulfil their responsibilities. There is a wide range of expertise within the governing body which the school utilises and benefits from. The governing body is highly motivated and well organised with a suitable range of committees, each with clear terms of reference. The curriculum committee takes an active interest in monitoring new policies, the implementation of the Literacy Hour and Numeracy lesson. Governors with responsibility for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs regularly liaise with staff. Termly monitoring visits have a specific focus, linked to areas of school development. Good communication and consultation exist between the headteacher and governors. Governors are keen to develop their skills through training and have their own development plan. Parents are kept well informed on management issues by the governors through termly newsletters. Currently the governing body is restructuring, as the school changes its status from a Grant Maintained to a Foundation school. Since the last inspection, governors have satisfactorily considered the success and, where possible, the cost effectiveness of major spending decisions.
77. The process of school development planning has been improved since the last inspection and has input from the whole staff through an annual audit. The annual school development plan is a good working document and meets the needs of the school in times of change. The plan includes prioritised targets for improvement that have appropriate time scales, costings and success criteria and names individuals to monitor the progress towards meeting the targets. There are good expectations for annual achievement and sound evaluation at the end of each year. However, the successes of the previous year are not reflected in the new plan. The plan is responsive to new initiatives, such as the recently developed Home/ School agreement and Homework policy. Currently, some subject policies are being adapted and modified to match the new national guidance for literacy and numeracy and to adjust the curriculum balance in some subject areas.
78. In response to the previous inspection, terms of reference for the Senior Management Team (SMT) were discussed and published. At their regular meetings long, medium and short term management issues are discussed. The team has recently been expanded to include a fourth member to reflect the needs of a growing school. The members of the SMT do not have any specific management roles delegated to them in addition to their subject responsibilities. The deputy headteacher has administrative responsibilities to ensure that the school runs smoothly on a daily basis and is expanding her management role by taking overall responsibility for target setting. Following liaison meetings with the feeder junior school, which the SMT attend, some curriculum emphasis has been changed to ensure a smoother transition between the schools.
79. The role of the subject co-ordinator has been clarified and developed since the last inspection and all have clear job descriptions. At the time of the inspection three staff new to the school had just taken on their responsibilities. Co-ordinators, whose subjects feature as a priority on the development plan, carry out a subject audit and prepare a costed plan for development. All co-ordinators prepare an annual subject report for governors and funding is allocated on a need basis. Co-ordinators organise the provision of resources well, monitor planning and support colleagues by sharing their curriculum expertise. The co-ordinators of 'priority subjects' and the headteacher monitor the quality of teaching in the identified areas. There is a planned programme

of demonstration numeracy lessons by the mathematics co-ordinator. Although co-ordinators carry out their administrative duties well, they do not all have a clear sense of what needs to be done to develop their subject and how standards can be raised.

80. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides very good leadership and a very good role model as a teacher. She provides very good informal training for staff and teachers assistants and ensures that special educational needs have a high profile in the school.
81. There is a positive ethos in the school which clearly reflects the majority of the school's wide aims. The school provides a happy, caring and consistent learning environment where individuals are valued. Relationships in the school are good at all levels. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work. The school provides equality and opportunity for pupils of different ages, ability and gender to learn and make progress. However, expectations of the higher attaining pupils are not always high enough, resulting in some under-achievement. The school is deserving of the praise given by parents at the meeting.
82. The school has made sound progress since the last inspection in 1996. The response to the previous inspection, overall, has been reasonably effective and standards have been maintained. The key issues from the last report have been addressed. The school has worked very hard to improve links with parents and the information it now provides for them is excellent. The process of development planning has been much improved through an extensive consultative process involving all sectors of the school community. The plan has been broadened to include premises and personnel issues. Governors have monitored the implementation and effectiveness of the various tasks identified and considered the cost effectiveness of their major spending decisions. The role of the Senior Management team has been clarified and their management responsibilities are starting to develop. The school acknowledges that it has made less progress in developing provision for more able pupils and has once again prioritised this issue. Staff training has taken place and a policy document produced. The headteacher holds activity groups for the more able mathematicians twice a week. In the medium term planning seen, teachers were not identifying activities for the more able. There is still under-achievement particularly in mathematics, science and writing for this group of pupils and the changes in provision so far have not addressed this. The school is suitably placed to develop and make the expected improvement in its future performance to meet the targets set.
83. The school complies with all legal requirements including those for the collective act of worship.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

84. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and a generous number of support staff who work well together. Job descriptions clearly identify responsibilities for all. Staff policies, practices and procedures are clearly laid out in a Staff Handbook. There are clear procedures for staff professional development and regular courses are identified for staff to improve their skills. Appropriate training has taken place in literacy and numeracy. Lunchtime assistants also receive training. New staff are supported by an effective induction programme. Administrative and caretaking staff contribute significantly to the smooth running and well ordered environment of the school.
85. The school meets the statutory requirements for appraising the work of teachers. The teaching assistants provide very good support for the work of the school, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. They give invaluable assistance in the classroom supporting lessons. They are well motivated and play a full and active part in the life of the school.
86. The school accommodation is very good and well maintained. Several major extensions have

been made to the original school building, which was built in 1844. In addition to the classrooms there are separate rooms for resources, library and learning support. Two portable classrooms provide attractive classrooms for the youngest pupils in the nursery and this has its own play area. The classrooms in the main building are of good size, light and enhanced by stimulating displays. A new computer suite is being constructed in the basement and should soon be ready for use.

87. The school is set in attractive grounds which offer interesting areas for play and recreation. In addition to the playground there is an adventure playground, a rainbow playground with climbing frames, a picnic area and a good sized playing field, the whole being surrounded by mature trees. There is a separate heated, but uncovered, swimming pool which is fully used in the Summer term. There is also a well-managed and well used environmental area with a large pond. The buildings and grounds present a pleasant, clean and stimulating learning environment and are well equipped to meet the demands of the curriculum.
88. The range of resources is satisfactory in most areas of the curriculum. There are a good number of computers in the school, although the range of software is limited until new orders arrive. The school makes good use of visiting speakers such as storytellers and has a list of parents with skills useful to the school who are willing to help when asked. There is an adequate collection of fiction and non-fiction books in the library and these are of a good quality. The library is well arranged, centrally sited and pupils know how to access information and borrow books. Reference books are used well in class situations to enhance pupils' skills of research. The range of reading books is narrow at some levels. Resources for the Literacy Hour have been developed over the last year. Classroom resources have been purchased to launch the Numeracy lessons but additional practical resources will be needed during the year.

### **The efficiency of the school**

89. The school is very efficiently managed with very good financial planning. The budget is sufficient to meet current needs with a suitable sum set aside each year to cover unforeseen contingencies. The chair of the governors' finance committee and the headteacher enjoy a very good working relationship and regularly meet to review the school's financial position. The headteacher and the Finance committee prepare and operate a budget that reflects the areas identified in the school development plan and the current aims of the school. In view of uncertainty about funding levels and the future of the site, the school has sensibly adopted a yearly planning cycle. The plan takes account of the previous year's priorities and expenditure and also of the longer term aims and needs of the school. It is formulated after very extensive consultation and discussion between governors and teaching and non-teaching staff and provides full details of all development areas. Governors fully consider the implications and possibilities of all elements of expenditure before setting each approved budget. The finance committee very carefully monitors the budget through reports from the headteacher and computer outruns.
90. The last inspection identified examining the relationship between targeted expenditure and raising pupils' attainment as an issue for action. Since then the development plan has included a list of success criteria for each of the identified priorities. The governing body is now able to judge the success of spending initiatives by using these criteria. Funds that are received for special educational needs and those provided for specific purposes such as the enhancement of in-service training are clearly identified within the budget and spent on the intended purpose.
91. The school makes very good use of its available staff, accommodation and resources. Teaching staff are very well deployed and good use is made of their areas of expertise. Non-teaching staff are used very well to support groups of pupils in practical activities and in literacy and numeracy. Both they and the special educational needs co-ordinators are used very effectively to

support those pupils on the special educational needs register. Very good use is made of the space available in teaching areas, the resource area, the large hall, attractive library and the newly created information technology suite, to support learning. Very good use is made of the attractive and extensive school grounds with well-marked play areas, adventure playground, climbing frames, wild area, wildlife pond and the swimming pool. Many of these facilities have been purchased or are maintained through the fund raising of parents and the school. Teachers make good use of the available teaching resources within their lessons to support and extend pupils' learning and pupils use them suitably and with care.

92. Financial control and administration are very good. Finance systems are operated in line with local authority guidance and regulation. The finance manager who very efficiently maintains the computerised records provides current information for the use of the headteacher and governors. Very good procedures are in place for ensuring value for money in purchases and tenders are sought for building and maintenance work. Annual audits confirm the quality of administration and control. Subject budgets are allocated through the school development plan and additional expenditure is prioritised on a needs basis and enhanced by fund raising by the Friends' association and the school. The school's office, caretaking and other staff work as a very effective team supporting the headteacher and the teaching staff very well. They have a very clear knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and offer advice to visitors and parents in a very friendly manner.
93. Taking into account the income that the school receives, the good quality of teaching, the good attitudes and behaviour of its pupils, the attainment of pupils when they enter the school, the sound progress that they make and the standards in line with national expectations when they leave, the school is providing sound value for money. This judgement is the same as that of the last inspection.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

94. Children under five are housed in the separate nursery unit and the two reception classes located in the main school. All the pupils attending the two nursery classes had only been in school for either three or four days prior to the inspection. Most of the children in the two reception classes had attended the school nursery part-time for either one or two terms depending on their date of birth. For all reception children, it was only their second week of full-time schooling. One member of staff was new to the nursery and both reception teachers were new to the school, but had experience elsewhere. Induction procedures for children entering the nursery and reception classes are very good and enabled the children to come to school happily and settle very quickly. The attainment of children entering the nursery classes at the age of four is typical of what would be expected for children of this age. By the age of five, the majority of children achieve the national standards defined for children of this age, recommended in the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Many children surpass these standards and are working within the National Curriculum. Children with special educational needs are quickly identified and given good support to enable them to make good progress.
95. Children under five follow a broad curriculum, which provides a good quality of education and an appropriate range of opportunities for them to make progress in the six areas of learning. Nursery and reception teachers plan together to ensure continuity of learning for the nursery children when they move to a full-time reception class next term. Teachers and assistants in the nursery classes plan and work closely together on a daily basis.
96. Progress in personal and social development is good and many children surpass the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five. Very good provision is made for childrens' personal and social development. From the time they enter the nursery class, they learn how to listen to the teacher and follow class routines. They play well together and take turns in using equipment and sharing toys. Children are made to feel that their ideas and contributions are valued. They are encouraged to think independently and behave sensibly. Behaviour is good. Children are sensible and tidy away at the end of sessions. They treat learning resources with care and respect. All are keen to help others by taking responsibility for classroom tasks and helping at snack time. Children respond very well to the high levels of independence expected of them. In the reception classes, pupils continue to make good progress in their understanding of the need for rules and routines. Children learn to line up to go out to play or assembly and learn how to put equipment away at the end of lessons. They learn the appropriate behaviour for assembly. In discussion they learn to put up their hands, take turns to answer questions and listen to each other. Through stories, pupils learn to appreciate the feelings of others and can see why it is important to be kind to each other and show care for other living things. In class, children can work harmoniously in groups, as well as independently. They talk well about activities within the group. They can undress and change for physical education lessons. There are simple class rules which children understand and are able to discuss. Teaching is very good throughout.
97. In their language and literacy skills, most children start the nursery with standards which match those expected for their age and several exceed them. Children develop good listening skills when hearing stories read to them. They answer questions and talk about their work and experiences, using a good vocabulary. Teaching is good and every opportunity is taken by the adults to engage pupils in conversation and develop their vocabulary and confidence. Imaginatively organised play corners, in the form of an office and beach hut provide children with a good stimulus to develop their writing. Children make good progress. Pupils show an awareness of different forms and uses of writing, when sending postcards and writing messages. A few pupils can write their names. In their reading, children learn to handle books correctly and are

encouraged to take books home to share on a daily basis. They listen carefully to sounds that rhyme at the end of words and learn poems quickly. Most can recognise their name and some pupils are aware of the sounds of some letters at the start of the nursery class. Reception children make satisfactory progress. Children can listen for longer periods of time during their literacy lesson and answer questions more directly. They will attempt to read a big story book together often recognising several words. They are interested in sharing books, are learning how to use the pictures as clues and can recognise some common words by sight. Children can name, sound and write some of the letters of the alphabet by the time they are five. Most achieve the standard expected by the age of five and many exceed these in speaking, listening and reading. Standards in writing generally match what is expected. Some children have difficulty with pencil grip and control. Insufficient opportunities are given to encourage pupils to write for themselves.

98. In their mathematical development, children in the nursery make good progress. Children learn to sing action songs and number rhymes. Skills and knowledge are developed through a number of practical counting, sorting and matching activities, using a range of equipment. In using building bricks and in their creative work, children can use their mathematical language to talk about patterns, describe positions and compare size, such as small medium and large when sorting bears. They are beginning to recognise and use numbers to five. Children learn the names of shapes such as circle and triangle and match these to objects in the classroom. Children develop an understanding of volume through sand and water play. Teaching is good. In the reception class, children make good progress. They develop their mathematical vocabulary and counting skills through short whole class numeracy activities, followed by some structured group number activities. These group activities take account of the differing abilities within the class. Children enjoy the rhymes they learn and games they play in these sessions. Children learn to write and recognise numbers up to 10 and the higher attaining pupils can count to 20. Most show awareness of addition and subtraction in practical situations. By the age of five most pupils have achieved the desirable learning outcomes and are ready for the National Curriculum.
99. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, pupils in the nursery and reception classes have standards that are in line with those expected for their age. Teachers plan a variety of experiences to enable pupils to make good progress. Teaching is very good in the nursery class and good in reception. All staff make good use of the activities to develop correct subject vocabulary. The children can use a magnifying glass to observe fruits and use their senses to describe the texture and colour. They can say which of these fruits can be eaten with the skin and which cannot. They compare old and new teddies linked with their story and recall past events in their own lives when talking about their holidays. Most children confidently use the computer to draw and print their picture. They have good control of the mouse to move around the screen and recognise some of the icons. Many have computers at home. They are also able to operate the tape recorder to listen to stories and rhymes. Children become familiar with the play areas in the school grounds and begin to find their way around the school by making visits to the main building. Children are given good opportunities to explore ways of sticking and joining different materials in their collage work. In reception, children can access the menu on the computer to find a program and in class lessons learn the correct names for the parts of the computer. They can use the mouse to drag items across the screen to dress a teddy. They develop skills in observation and show curiosity when observing goldfish and plants. They can recognise the distinction between past and present in their own lives. They can talk in detail about their families and where they live.
100. In their physical development, pupils in the nursery make good progress in the development of their gross motor skills through the use of large wheeled toys outside. They develop confidence in using the climbing frame and learn how to balance and slide down the equipment. Their movements are well controlled as they move around the classroom. They develop good hand and eye co-ordination through matching games, threading activities and jig-saws. Although children

have developed good fine muscular control to operate the computer, several have difficulty holding pencils correctly and using scissors. In the reception class, children use the apparatus in the hall to further develop their skills in climbing and balance. All children have a good regard for personal space. Children develop improved fine muscular control as they practise letter and number formation. Children achieve the desirable outcomes by the time they are five years old and many exceed them. Teaching is good.

101. Creative aspects are well developed in relation to the Desirable Learning outcomes and progress is good. There are appropriate opportunities for children in both the nursery and reception classes to present ideas through drawing, painting and music. In dance, reception children show increasing ability to use their imagination and can act as fairies and giants. The nursery children learn the names of some percussion instruments and match the sounds they make. They take part in action songs. In reception, pupils have an understanding of loud and soft and are able to use body percussion. Children use paint confidently. Nursery children choose appropriate colours to paint pictures of apples and make patterns with potato prints and finger paints. Teaching is mainly good with some very good lessons seen in the nursery. In music there was very good use of demonstration to show the pupils how to play the instruments correctly and to listen carefully to the different sounds made. Nursery nurses make a very valuable contribution to this area of learning.

## **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

### **English**

102. When compared to similar schools, using 1998 National Curriculum test and task results, results show that standards in reading are above the average for similar schools and in writing they are broadly in line with the average. Comparisons using 1999 data are currently unavailable.
103. Using pupils' average scores and comparing them with national averages between 1996 to 1998, results show that standards in reading and writing have remained broadly in line with the national averages. Results of 1999 National Curriculum tests and tasks also show that standards remain around the national average. For the past three years, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading is well above the national average and reflects the strong parental involvement in hearing their child read regularly at home.
104. The last inspection of 1996 judged standards in English to be 'in line with national expectations'. This remains the case. Parents are pleased with the standards the school achieves.
105. Within the school, there are no significant differences between pupils' achievements in reading and writing and their achievements in mathematics and science.
106. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Key Stage 1, standards are, overall, in line with the national average. In reading, the percentage of pupils reading at a level higher than that expected for their age is above average. Pupils read with good fluency and accuracy. They use several strategies for reading words they are unsure of, such as reading on past the word and guessing the meaning from the sentence or using clues from the illustrations. The use of 'sounding out' (phonic) strategies is under-developed. Pupils enjoy reading and can talk a little about their favourite authors and the type of stories they like and why. Higher attaining pupils know how to use the index and contents page in a non-fiction book. Younger pupils in the key stage, in the main, read at a level appropriate for their age. The school encourages parents to hear their child read at home. Pupils who read at home nearly every day make very good progress in their reading.

107. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are in line with national expectations. However, higher attaining pupils are underachieving because insufficient attention is given to encouraging pupils to practise and refine their skills in speaking to an audience.
108. In writing, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards are in line with those expected for the pupils' age. The content of pupils' work shows that they write suitably sequenced stories and, at this stage of the school year, make appropriate use of punctuation such as full stops and capital letters. However, standards of handwriting and presentation are unsatisfactory. Over half the pupils in Years 1 and 2 use an incorrect pencil grip. Pupils' ability to use letter sounds to help them spell is under-developed because there is an imbalance in the way spelling is taught, especially at the beginning of Key Stage 1 and in reception classes. The school makes very good use of a set of 'word walls' to help and encourage pupils to recognise and learn to spell words by sight. However, there is little emphasis on teaching and encouraging pupils to make use of the sounds that they know to help them spell. The result of the imbalance in teaching is that pupils are not confident in their attempts at spelling words they are unsure of and this limits their independent writing. They tend to use words they can remember to spell by sight rather than use the words they want; therefore, pupils' writing, both in English and other subjects, such as science, is restricted.
109. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are well supported with appropriate work and teaching. They have good self esteem and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. When they are taught by the special educational needs co-ordinator in their group work, progress is very good.
110. Overall, progress for the majority of pupils is satisfactory. Progress in reading and learning to recognise whole words by sight is good and a contributory factor is very good parental involvement. Progress in handwriting and presentation is unsatisfactory because insufficient emphasis is placed on teaching and practising the basic skills of correct pencil grip and correct letter formation and proportion. The findings of the previous inspection indicated that 'Pupils are taught to form their letters, using correct pencil grip and the majority of pupils learn good letter formation'.
111. Progress for higher attaining pupils is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not set high enough expectations for these pupils, for example in speaking to an audience, in the quantity of work they produce, or the quality of the presentation of their work. In group work, higher attaining pupils are not always extended by the work set them. For example, they may be given a work sheet to complete, which they complete well and are then given more of the same to do, rather than work to extend their thinking.
112. Pupils' attitudes to their work in English are satisfactory, overall, but good in reading. In lessons, pupils listen reasonably attentively to their teacher but there is a significant minority of pupils who fidget or talk to their friends in the whole-class part of the Literacy Hour session. In group work, pupils working with a teacher or classroom support assistant apply themselves to their work and make good progress. However, unsupported groups make unsatisfactory progress because they do not apply themselves to the work set for them. In a whole Year 2 group story session, the behaviour of a significant number of pupils spoiled the atmosphere and enjoyment for many.
113. The quality of teaching in English is good; it is very good for drama. The general strengths in the teaching of English are teachers' very good planning for their Literacy Hour sessions and their good subject knowledge. A particularly good feature in teachers' planning is the deployment of the proficient teachers assistants who are always clear as to what is expected of them. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, group work is very well organised and resourced

and no time is wasted. Teachers set high expectations for behaviour and, at the start of a new school year, have formed good relationships with their pupils. The quality of day to day assessment of what pupils have learned in lessons and need to learn next is inconsistent and, currently, unsatisfactory. This lack of consistency in assessment is one cause of the unsatisfactory progress made by higher attaining pupils. In lessons, teachers, generally, give good feedback to pupils about their work and how they can improve, but marking in pupils' books is inconsistent. In some classes, work is marked regularly and helpful comments are made to help the pupil improve. In others, work is just ticked.

114. The school's strategy for literacy is satisfactory. Planning is good and in accordance with the National Literacy Strategy. Early literacy skills are taught well to promote pupils' enjoyment and love of reading but in writing, very basic skills are not taught thoroughly and systematically; for example, pencil grip, letter formation and use of letter sounds to help pupils spell. The links made with other subjects such as science, history and geography are beginning to develop appropriately with a suitable emphasis on non-fiction texts. However, the lack of secure skills in independent writing hinders pupils when they need to record their findings, for example, in a science activity. The school keeps parents very well informed about how reading is taught in the school and encourages parents to be involved in their child's learning.
115. The co-ordinator for English provides sound leadership and has a satisfactory overview of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject for Key Stage 1 pupils. Samples of pupils written work are retained but are, currently not levelled against National Curriculum criteria. Pupils complete a standardised reading test in Year 1 but there is not a system in place whereby results are analysed and used to improve teaching or planning. Resources for English are satisfactory, although there is a need to improve the quality of reading books for the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1.

## **Mathematics**

116. Results of National Curriculum tests for pupils aged seven in 1998 show the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (Level 2) to be close to the national average and average in relation to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who reached the higher level (Level 3) was also close to the national average. The results for 1999 are slightly higher but are still close to the national average in recently published national results. Evidence gathered during the inspection also finds standards of attainment to be close to the national average. Since 1997, overall standards have improved. The school successfully began to implement part of the National Numeracy Strategy last term. A greater emphasis has been placed on mental mathematics and is having a positive impact on standards. All classes have a full lesson of numeracy timetabled this term and were starting only the second week of this programme at the time of the inspection. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards of numeracy are satisfactory.
117. All the lessons observed during the inspection had a 'number focus' because of the introduction of the new curriculum. Judgements on pupils' attainment by seven and coverage of the National Curriculum were made by scrutinising samples of Year 2 pupils' work from the previous term. By the age of seven the majority of pupils can count sets of objects accurately and can count in twos, fives and tens up to 100. Pupils can recognise and continue sequences of numbers, including odd and even numbers. Most pupils can write stories for addition, subtraction and multiplication facts. Pupils can use calculators to add and subtract larger numbers. They can name and tessellate two-dimensional shapes and name some common three-dimensional shapes. They can collect data about 'pop groups' and use this to make a graph. However, there were few examples of data handling in the work samples supplied. Some higher attaining pupils apply their learning to problem solving and investigations but the majority of pupils covered less of this

work and standards were lower than in the other areas. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a sound understanding of number, shape and space.

118. Overall progress is satisfactory. Progress in the lessons observed during the inspection was satisfactory in Year 1 and good in Year 2. Year 1 pupils were working within 10, could recognise the numbers, count forwards and backwards. Most had developed an understanding of 'one more than' and 'one less than' by the end of the week. Pupils in Year 2 could count forwards and backwards in 10's. Pupils learnt to use the 100 square to count forwards and backwards in tens from different starting points. Many could find patterns of numbers and fill in missing numbers on blank 100 squares by the end of the week. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 were challenged to apply their knowledge to the 101-200 square. In group activities in the numeracy lessons, pupils with special educational needs were well supported by adults and the work expected of them was well matched to their ability. The overall progress of the majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils made satisfactory progress in some of the lessons observed. There is regular weekly provision for the most able mathematicians to be withdrawn for extension activities but the groups were not operating at the time of the inspection and there was insufficient evidence to show that this is raising standards. Activities planned for the more able pupils in class often lack the challenge to enable them to achieve the higher levels in national tests. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. There were limited opportunities at this stage in the term for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other curriculum areas.
119. Pupils enjoy the Numeracy lesson and are especially keen to play the games which improve their mental agility. They behave well and are learning to concentrate for sustained periods of time in the whole class session. In group work, pupils are supportive of each other and share resources well. Most can work purposefully and independently, whilst the teacher is working with another group. Pupils do not always take enough pride in the presentation of their work. The effective relationships between teachers and pupils have a positive effect on learning.
120. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. During the inspection, four good lessons and three satisfactory lessons were seen in Key Stage 1. There is very good planning for numeracy lessons and teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Teachers are benefiting from the recent training they have been given. Very good use is made of the additional adult help available to support group activities and adults are well briefed by teachers. There are good whole class introductions of appropriate length, good questioning and development of mathematical language. At present, teachers are establishing new class routines for the numeracy lesson. A good variety of organisational methods is used to maintain a brisk lesson pace and ensure that all groups within the class have an opportunity to interact with the teacher or an assistant. The quality of oral feedback given to pupils in lessons is good. Work is not always marked in a way that makes it clear what pupils have to do to improve and learn from their mistakes. Teachers were seen to adjust the planning of following lessons as a result of the assessments made during inspection. Some teachers make useful daily notes on their plans about the performance of some pupils. Parents are well informed as to how they can help their pupils with mathematical tasks at home. The school is keeping parents well informed through meetings about the teaching of numeracy in the school.
121. The subject co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and a clear idea of what needs to be done to move the subject forward. She helps with planning and monitors teaching. Good arrangements have been made for further staff numeracy training and the co-ordinator plans to model lessons in other classes during the term. The useful scheme of work, developed last year, meets the National Curriculum requirements, incorporates the National Numeracy Strategy and has moved away from the commercial scheme previously used. The mathematics curriculum is identified as a priority area for development in the school management plan this year to coincide with the full

introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Annotated samples of pupils' work are kept but these are not levelled against National Curriculum criteria and pupils' progress is recorded on a record sheet. Teacher assessments based on these records under-estimate pupils' performance in the national tests because the level criteria are rigorously applied. Resources are adequate and new classroom equipment has been purchased for the teaching of numeracy. The school recognises the need to widen its range of printed material and create a resource bank now that a commercial scheme is no longer used. The school is developing the practical mathematics resources to fully teach the National Numeracy Strategy. Some use is made of information technology as a tool for learning, including the programmable floor robot, calculators and computers. Presently, computer use is limited by the range of software until the new stock arrives.

## Science

122. Attainment in the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average in 1998 and the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades (Level 3) was well below the national average. Attainment was well below that of similar schools. Staff attribute this to their particularly rigorous assessment methods which make it very difficult for pupils to be awarded the higher grades. The results in 1999 show some improvement, overall, and a particular improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades. Comparisons, using the recently published 1999 data, show these results to be close to the national average. In the lessons observed, pupils were attaining in line with their ability except for the higher attaining pupils, who have insufficient opportunities to attain above the majority.
123. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of living things, materials, forces, light and electricity. They can use that knowledge to ask questions that lead to investigations, for example, where they investigated the habitats of various mini-beasts in the school grounds. In their practical work and investigations, the pupils' skills are satisfactory overall, with some good development in observation, reflecting the emphasis placed on this skill in the teaching. They can collect relevant results and display them in pictograms following an investigation of the number of living things found in an environment. They form appropriate, simple conclusions linked to obvious scientific ideas. In Year 1, pupils can deduce that the change in their reflected appearance is due to the curved surface. Their ability to compare objects, finding differences and similarities, is satisfactory. Younger pupils are able to use accurate names for the parts of plants and animals. The opportunity to develop the skills of using information technology is currently under-developed in the science curriculum, due to the lack of an appropriate range of software.
124. Progress in science knowledge, understanding and development of practical skills is satisfactory in all areas of the science curriculum. For most pupils their progress relies on using basic scientific ideas. Some of the higher attaining pupils, in their discussions, are beginning to use simple models. For example, Year 2 pupils deduced that electricity in a house must have hidden wires to carry the electricity to the lights and appliances. Pupils with special needs make good progress in relation to their ability when supported by adults because the work is closely linked to their needs and the development of basic skills. All pupils are able to talk easily about what they observe, using simple scientific language. Pupils are encouraged to use all their senses when making observations. Orally they use science words appropriately. Writing in science is under-developed. Much of the recording is pictorial and pupils have insufficient opportunities to use a variety of recording methods and develop their independent writing skills to record.
125. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in science are very positive with all showing confidence and responding positively to the tasks set. The lower attainers feel confident enough to answer and ask questions. All pupils work well as individuals and support each other in group work, following the rules for safe working.

126. The teaching is satisfactory, overall, with one example of good teaching observed. Teachers demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of science in their teaching. Appropriate methods and variety of teaching are used to support and aid the progress of the pupils. There is effective use of time to maintain a good pace. The lesson objectives are clear and a good range of relevant and interesting activities is planned, appropriate for the average ability, but there is a lack of effective provision and challenge for higher attaining pupils. Assessment is developing with some good practices to assess and record understanding at the end of a topic. However, insufficient use is made of this information to move learning forward.
127. The management of the subject is good. The curriculum is planned to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum and is based on recent national guidance. The teaching is well supported by an adequate range of resources and the school makes good use of an environmental area to enhance the teaching. The lack of good monitoring and evaluation procedures to inform future teaching and set targets is restricting the development of the subject.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **127. Information technology**

128. The attainment of pupils is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of the key stage. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. Where pupils are acquiring new skills through direct teaching attainment is often above expectations, whereas, where pupils are working independently at consolidation tasks, neither their understanding nor skills are extended.
129. Younger pupils learn the names for the different elements of computer equipment and remember their function. They use the mouse to control and position data on the screen as they dress teddy and learn to instruct and programme a floor robot. Older pupils learn about the storage capabilities of a CD ROM and how to access the information it contains as they search for information about Queen Victoria. Throughout the school, pupils learn to operate and control communication equipment such as cassettes recorders and can recognise and list items that are controlled by microprocessors.
130. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress. In direct teaching lessons pupils make good progress. Reception pupils learn how to select the items of teddy's clothing and to click and drag them using the mouse. They show good levels of control and co-ordination. Younger pupils increase their knowledge as they consider the wide range of appliances in their homes that are technology controlled. They record directional instructions on a cassette recorder as they follow a route through the school and then play them back to their class. Older pupils confidently log on to the computer system and use the mouse to select the appropriate icon from the tool bar or window to control and select functions. They have good recall of the necessary steps to operate the printer or to gain access to a CD ROM. However, opportunities for pupils to practice and extend their skills outside these sessions is less developed, with computers often switched on in classrooms but unused. The use of information technology to support other curriculum areas is also limited, with few examples seen of word processing, research or the storage of information. Currently the school is awaiting the delivery of additional software to improve computer use in other subjects.
131. Pupils are very well motivated with a keen interest in the use of computers. Many have access to computers at home and talk confidently about programs that they use. They confidently operate the equipment with considerable care and co-operate well with one another in its use. They are amazed at the control and storage capabilities as they excitedly operate the floor robot or view a picture of Queen Victoria from a CD ROM micropedia.

132. Teaching is good in two thirds of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the remainder. In the majority of lessons observed there was direct teaching of information technology skills, with the result that pupils made good progress in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers show good subject knowledge and their expectations of pupils' standards are good. They are careful to build on pupils' previous knowledge and make good use of the plenary session to consolidate and ensure pupils' understanding.
133. The strength of the subject lies in the good quality computer equipment available to pupils. The recent acquisition of new machines through government funding means that each room now has an up to date machine with CD ROM capability. This coupled with the current preparation of the new ICT suite means that it will be possible for the school to extend the teaching of information technology skills through group tuition. The subject is well co-ordinated and the co-ordinator has devised an assessment record that will record pupils' information technology experience and indicate areas for development. Currently, assessment does not sufficiently inform curriculum planning. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Recent in-service training for teaching staff and classroom assistants has ensured that they are confident in its use. They intend to extend this information technology capability in the near future by incorporating Internet access.
133. **Religious education**
134. There was very little written evidence in the samples of pupils' work examined from the previous term and in the work covered so far this term. Judgements were made by examining teachers' plans and records, wall displays and class books as well as talking to pupils.
135. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus, 'Open Worlds'.
136. Pupils understand the main Christian festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils learn about the stories that Jesus told from the Christian Bible, such as the 'Parable of the Sower' in connection with harvest celebrations. Pupils are also familiar with the story of Noah's ark in connection with work on caring for the environment. Through their study of festivals pupils understand some connections between the Jewish, Hindu and Christian faiths. Pupils know that they have worth and value and are special to someone. They can discuss the story of 'Dogger' and talk about things that are special to them, such as their favourite clothes, toys and teddies. Pupils show a good understanding of people who help them and how they can help others. They can suggest ways of doing this, both in school and at home.
137. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making sound progress in relation to their abilities. They are developing an awareness and understanding of the nature of religious beliefs by looking at some features of the Christian faith and aspects of other religions. Younger pupils can respond to stories and express their feelings, some empathising with the characters. Older pupils visit the local church, learn to identify some parts of the building and explain their significance. By the end of the key stage, pupils can respond to moral issues, such as care of the environment and display their own posters.
138. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the subject. They listen well to stories, are keen to contribute to discussion and value the contributions of others. Pupils are confident to reflect and express their thoughts and share their feelings with others. Many are less enthusiastic about written work when this is required.
139. Overall teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good story telling skills and in one lesson puppets were effectively used to encourage empathy. Questioning is generally good. It encourages the

pupils to think for themselves and time is given for reflection. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. During the inspection week, the actual time spent on the subject was insufficient. Religious education lessons often followed physical education lessons in the hall and a significant amount of time was lost as the class moved and changed. As a result, the well prepared lessons were rushed and there was not enough time for pupils to explore ideas and complete the practical activities planned. Currently there is no system for checking the amount of time spent on the subject.

140. The co-ordinator for religious education is new to the post. There is a good scheme of work which is based on the locally agreed syllabus and is supportive of teachers' planning. Programmes of work are explicit for each year group but would be difficult for staff to cover unless the subject is given more time. There is a manageable class record of pupils' progress. There was no evidence to suggest that assessment was informing future curriculum planning. Resources are adequate and artefacts have been collected to support the teaching of other faiths and festivals.

140. **Art**

141. Standards have remained in line with national expectations since the previous inspection. Drawing and painting skills are satisfactory; pupils have satisfactory control of pencils and brushes. They have good observational skills, as observed in a Year 2 lesson on a Monet painting, where they used visual clues to good effect to respond to the picture. They have good opportunities to observe the work of famous artists and work in their style. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the materials and simple techniques to produce a picture.

142. The displays, even at this early stage in the term, in classrooms and around the school are of very good quality and clearly demonstrate the expected standard. In a reception display of a collage fish, pupils showed they were able to use textures and surfaced papers and have a good awareness of differences in the colour and texture of materials. There is a good range of three-dimensional work, including clay and textiles and some work which reflects different cultural heritages. Art is skilfully integrated into the topic work, for example, the observational drawings, models and collages of mini-beasts.

143. Progress is good. Pupils are making good gains in their knowledge and understanding of artists and apply this knowledge to their own work. Year 2 pupils painted water lilies in the style of Monet, showing particular skill in their mixing of colours. Their painting, drawing and modelling skills are improving steadily. In one lesson, pupils were seen to be developing good understanding of the use of shading to give a sense of light and dark and pupils were able to look carefully and record what they could see in the playground. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

144. Pupils' response to art is very good. Behaviour is good and pupils show enthusiasm for the subject. In most classes pupils are absorbed by their work and persevere to complete a task, refining and adjusting their ideas as it develops. Many can discuss the work using simple technical words. They support each other, share equipment and work together well. Pupils take pride in the quality of their finished work.

145. The quality of teaching is good, overall, with one unsatisfactory lesson observed where the learning objectives were not met. Teachers show interest and flair. They have good subject knowledge which they use skilfully to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Objectives are focused and explanations are clear, ensuring that pupils can follow the instructions and achieve a good result. Teachers make good use of demonstration and appropriate intervention to raise standards. Teachers make good use of praise and encourage pupils with good humour. They

give opportunities for pupils to appraise each others' work at the end of the lesson. General day to day assessment is not well developed and relies upon the assessment of finished pieces of work at the end of a topic.

146. The management of the subject is good. Planning is effective and monitored by the co-ordinator. There is little evidence in planning for pupils of differing abilities. The teaching is well supported by an adequate range of resources.

### **Design and technology**

147. Design and technology was not being taught during the inspection period so all judgements are based upon scrutiny of the displays around the school, actual objects, photographs and discussion with teachers and pupils. The observed pupil work indicates that overall attainment is at the expected level for age in design and making skills. Design and technology tasks are related to topic work and are based on the use of science, history and art. For tasks such as designing a duvet cover, or the production of an Iron Man, the level of knowledge is satisfactory to good and the pupils can apply their knowledge from science and art to develop their technology skills.
148. The completed models such as hats, duvets and models of playground equipment show a range of variation in making skills. The quality of the finished models is good. From the written reports in pupils' work folders it is clear that evaluation does take place but it is limited and simplistic. There is no evidence of discussing the design of simple products to evaluate why they look like they do. The least able pupils are developing satisfactory basic skills and are achieving in line with their ability.
149. It is not possible to make a judgement on the overall progress that pupils make. Examination of a range of materials used over the age range and examination of objectives seen in the planning suggests that progress in design and technology is satisfactory for the majority of pupils for making and design but limited in evaluation.
150. The planning and structuring of the design technology work within topics has led to a fragmentation of the components of technology. All features of design, making and evaluating can be found somewhere in the curriculum but the pupil's experience does not relate to a coherent programme to develop technology as a subject in its own right. There is therefore progression but continuity is weak, making it hard to develop evaluation skills. There is a satisfactory cycle for the development of skills but the infrequency of technology in the yearly cycle restricts skill development. The co-ordinator is new to the school. The subject is satisfactorily resourced. The school makes good use of construction and mechanics kits. IT was not seen being used to support learning in technology. There are adequate resources for food technology, a cooker in the resource area and a microwave which is often used in the classroom.

### **150. Geography**

151. During the week of the inspection, lessons in geography were not observed in all year groups because of its alternation with history. However, scrutiny of work and documentation and discussion with pupils in lessons, indicate that attainment in geography is in line with expectations of pupils of a similar age. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection. Progress over time is satisfactory in most aspects of the subject in developing geographical skills.
152. Younger pupils in the reception classes look at the weather on a daily basis and describe its features, selecting suitable descriptors such as sunny or dull from word cards. They begin to develop mapwork skills as they place features and vehicles on play mats and develop their

directional language as they describe the routes taken.

153. Pupils in Year 1, further develop their mapwork skills as they draw plan views of their classroom. Using directional language they describe the route from their classroom to other areas such as the library or the hall and record this on a plan of the school. This is linked to information technology as they programme a floor robot to mirror their routes on a large floor plan of the school. Pupils extend their fieldwork skills and geographical understanding, as for example, when they identify playground features from photographs and observations. They select ones that they find attractive and justify their choice. Older pupils extend their knowledge and understanding as they survey Dunmow, identifying features and buildings that they have observed on plans and maps and recording them on their own. They learn to identify the countries of the United Kingdom. Towards the end of the key stage they make a comparative study of Walton using a visit to increase their knowledge.
154. Pupils make sound progress as they move through the school. Their mapwork and fieldwork skills develop as they move from imaginary maps to recording routes through the school and then to identifying features of the town in situ. They employ and refine these skills as they observe, record and comment on the features of the grounds that they find attractive and note the similarities and differences that they observe between their own locality and Walton. Although the lower attaining pupils are well supported, there is no evidence that specific tasks are set to extend the higher attaining pupils.
155. Within their lessons, pupils show a keen interest and are eager to offer information and participate. Pupils are well behaved and listen carefully to the instructions that they are given. They maintain concentration for extended periods and show good recall of information. However, their work is sometimes hurried and does not always show sufficient care in presentation or handwriting.
156. Teaching is good in over half the lessons seen and satisfactory in the remainder. In all lessons, teachers make good use of encouragement to motivate pupils and promote learning. Available resources are well deployed and good use is made of the classroom assistants to support groups or lower attaining pupils. Teachers show sound subject knowledge and plan their lessons with care. In the better lessons, a clear introduction and explanation of the task ensure that pupils make suitable gains in knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 1 class where they rehearsed giving directions to enable a child robot to correctly follow the route on the school plan before programming the floor robot.
157. The strength of the subject lies in the good use that is made of the school grounds, the environs and visits as a resource to provide practical experience and examples for study. The recently revised scheme of work provides clear guidance on the progressive development of geographical skills and knowledge for each year group and use is made of the recent national subject guidance. Teachers' planning is monitored by the co-ordinator but there are no other formal systems for monitoring the work provided or the quality of teaching in geography. The recently revised arrangements for assessment do not readily provide teachers with the necessary information to target higher attaining pupils. Resources are sufficient but more pictures of physical features and multiple copies of maps, plans and aerial photographs are needed.

## **History**

158. During the inspection, because this subject is alternated with geography, lessons in history were observed in only one year group. Evidence is, therefore, also based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning, displays and interviews with staff and pupils. Based on this evidence pupils are working at a level expected for their age. There is a suitable emphasis on the teaching of chronology and historical enquiry so that pupils make satisfactory progress. This is in

comparison to the last inspection, which found that almost all pupils achieved beyond national expectation for their age, possibly as a result of the additional amount of curriculum time which was given to the subject in 1996.

159. Pupils in the reception classes develop a sense of chronology by the sequencing of stories and considering how they have changed as they have grown. They learn terms relating to the passing of time such as yesterday, old and new and look at toys and objects from the past. Year 1 pupils prepare interviews for parents and visitors about their childhood and then record the results of their answers, comparing them with their own knowledge and experience. They compare the observations made on their visit to Hedingham Castle with the arrangements in their own homes. Older pupils consider changes in the immediate past and look at the difference between their school experience and that of Victorian children when they take part in a re-enactment at Braintree museum.
160. Overall, pupils make sound progress as they move through the school in the skills of historical enquiry and in their knowledge and understanding. They make good progress in their chronological understanding. Younger pupils are clearly developing a sense of time as they place immediate events in order and record the days of the week. Older pupils are able to select suitable examples from their own lives to illustrate zig-zag books with events from the past, present and future. They recall details of their visit to Hedingham Castle and comment on the difference between the food store and the kitchen at home. In discussions about the Victorian period, they view photographs of classrooms, people and trades. Using enquiry skills they formulate and answer questions extending their historical knowledge and understanding. They learn about Queen Victoria's childhood and compare it with their own. Details are researched using reference books and information technology is employed to access information in a CD ROM micropedia about Queen Victoria.
161. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and are attentive and well behaved. They are pleased to recall details of their visit to the castle and to bring artefacts and information from home to support their work on the Victorians. Pupils' work is generally satisfactorily presented although there is often insufficient attention to spelling and handwriting. Although good support is given to enable the less able pupils to access the tasks there is no provision of more challenging tasks for the higher attainers.
162. Teaching is good in two thirds of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the remainder. The teachers show clear subject knowledge in the way that they guide pupils to the correct answer through the use of careful questioning. Good use is made of photographs, pictures and artefacts to support this and relate learning to pupils' own experience. For example, one Year 2 class has created a museum corner of Victorian items that include a school slate, an iron, a hot water bottle and a miniature rocking horse, as well as selection of photographs and pictures. Homework is used well to support this process as for example, when Year 2 pupils take home a timeline of their own lifetime to complete.
163. The scheme of work provides clear guidance on the progression of historical skills and knowledge for each year group and use is made of recent national subject guidance. The recently appointed co-ordinator supports teachers through their planning and monitors the teaching of history through viewing this. There are at present no formal arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching or pupils' work. The recently revised assessment arrangements do not yet provide a clear picture of pupils' abilities and understanding. Visits are well used to support pupils' learning and the level of resources is generally sufficient, although more artefacts and a wider range of photographs, documents and illustrations are needed.

163. **Music**

164. Only one music lesson was observed during the inspection and judgements are made based on the use of music across the curriculum, including assemblies and by scrutinising teachers' planning and other documentation
165. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on the progress pupils make. However, in a whole-school singing practice session, the majority of pupils could sing in time and tune and could also sing 'London's Burning' in two parts. In a Year 1 lesson observed, teaching was good; pupils had a good understanding of basic rhythm and could use their chosen instruments to copy and repeat a rhythm. Pupils have opportunities to listen to a wide range of music at the beginning and end of assemblies. Scrutiny of displays of work indicates that older reception class pupils can record their feelings about a piece of music competently.
166. The co-ordinator for the subject is knowledgeable and supports her colleagues well. The school makes good use of a commercially produced scheme of work for music so that all areas of the programme of study are planned for and covered. However, the depth to which these areas are studied is affected by the foreshortened music lessons which follow physical education (PE) lessons. The time pupils take to change from their PE kit eats into the time allocated for music lessons. This has an effect on pupils' attitudes towards the subject. They are very keen to take part in the lesson, but because of the short session, they have few opportunities to do this. Currently there are no opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching.
167. Resources for music are satisfactory. There is a suitable range of tuned and untuned percussion and a wide range of taped music for pupils to listen to.

167. **Physical education**

168. Due to the school's timetable arrangements, only certain strands of the physical education curriculum were observed in each year group. Based on these observations pupils attain standards that are similar to pupils of their age. The school makes good use of its outdoor swimming pool during the summer term and it is evident from scrutiny of the swimming records that pupils are achieving levels well above those expected for pupils of this age. This is in comparison to the last inspection, which found that most pupils achieved beyond national expectations in all aspects of the subject.
169. In dance, reception pupils explore moods and feelings. They illustrate happiness and grumpiness as they move, portraying the fairies and the giant they have seen in a class story. In gymnastics, younger pupils learn to control their bodies and refine their movements as they travel at different speeds and heights in and out of designated areas. Older pupils work at improving their games skills as they throw and catch bean bags with increasing accuracy and control small balls with their feet. Throughout the school, pupils learn to recognise the effects that exercise has on their bodies as they feel the change in heart rate before and after exertion and the effects of stretching on tendons and muscles. Pupils develop increasing confidence in the water and this summer two thirds of all pupils were able to swim a width unaided. This is very good for pupils of this age.
170. Pupils make good progress in their lessons when they have sufficient time to plan, practise and refine their performance. Because of timetable arrangements and the time taken to change and reach the hall some lessons are shorter than planned. Where this occurs pupils make sound progress but do not achieve the levels of attainment of which they are capable. In gymnastics where they are encouraged by demonstration and clear coaching and then have time to reflect on ways of improving their own performance they make good progress and achieve levels above those expected for their age. Similarly, in dance, through observation and direction, they learn

not only to use body movement to convey feelings but also to incorporate facial expression. However, when the lesson is hurried because of insufficient, time pupils do not receive the necessary coaching to develop the skills of the over arm throw or have the opportunity to develop and employ ball control techniques. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their lessons by teachers assistants and make good progress.

171. Pupils show obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm for their physical education lessons. They are well behaved and pay close attention to their teachers' instructions. They are very aware of safety issues and make good use of the space available to them without infringing that of others. All pupils are suitably attired and work bare footed to enhance and improve their performance. They are eager to participate.
172. Teaching ranges between good and satisfactory with over half those lessons observed being satisfactory. In the good lessons teachers identify coaching points and correct errors to move learning forward at a brisk pace. Where time is constrained, teachers hurry to ensure that all activities are covered, with the result that coaching is more limited and tasks are not extended to provide greater challenge. All teachers make good use of praise to encourage improvements and have good expectations of behaviour, which ensures that pupils are attentive.
173. The scheme of work includes all strands of physical education and the recently appointed co-ordinator views teachers' planning to ensure suitable coverage. The recently revised arrangements for assessment do not record the quality of pupils' movements and do not, therefore, help teachers plan their lessons to extend pupils' performance. Very good use is made of the spacious hall, playground areas and outdoor swimming pool. There is a good selection of small games equipment with many items acquired through supermarket vouchers. Although there is sufficient large gymnastics apparatus some of it is heavy and this limits its use with younger pupils.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

174. The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, which included a lay inspector. During the four days of classroom observations which involved 16 inspector days, 67 lessons, including parts of lessons, were inspected, totalling 55 hours. This total includes sampling pupils' work. Time was also spent interviewing staff with management responsibilities and talking to pupils.
175. Inspectors gathered evidence from a wide range of sources, which included classroom observations, discussions with children in each class and also in small groups, and hearing a representative sample of readers from each year group.
176. Discussions were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, finance governor, SEN, numeracy and literacy governors, parent governors, PTA representatives and members of teaching staff, non teaching and support staff for pupils with special educational needs.
177. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, which included the school management plan, curriculum plans, school policies, the schemes of work, financial information, teachers' plans and pupils' records. As the inspection was held so early in the year, work samples from the previous year were examined. Information from a questionnaire sent to parents, which 80 per cent returned, was analysed. A meeting was held with parents, of whom 26 attended.

## 178. DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y2	253	1	23	15

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (YR – Y2)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.75

#### Education support staff (YR – Y2)

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked each week	202
Average class size	27.3

### Financial data

Financial year:	1998
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	£
Total Income	528,144
Total Expenditure	521,783
Expenditure per pupil	1,925.40
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,980
Balance carried forward to next year	42,341

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

210
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Number of questionnaires returned:

161
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**Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	31	62	5	1	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	39	50	5	4	3
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	38	29	8	3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	64	11	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	15	63	10	10	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	32	57	8	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	46	24	6	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	22	55	15	6	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	34	54	10	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	57	9	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	54	40	3	1	1

**Other issues raised by parents**

The number of recent changes in staffing. The appreciation of the value placed on pupils' work through the stimulating wall displays seen around the school.