

INSPECTION REPORT

Mildmay Junior School

Chelmsford

LEA Area: Essex

Unique Reference Number:114892

Inspection Number: 188336

Head-Teacher: Mr D Dyer

Reporting inspector: Mrs K Beck
10090

Dates of inspection: 18/10/1999 - 21/10/1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Robin Way Chelmsford Essex CM2 8AU
Telephone number:	01245 250019
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs F Mountain
Date of previous inspection:	20/05/1996 - 23/05/1996

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Subject responsibilities

Design and technology
Information communication
technology

English
Art
Physical education

Equal opportunities
Science
Religious education
Mathematics
Music
Special educational needs
History
Geography

Aspect responsibilities

Attainment and progress
Teaching
Curriculum and assessment
Attitudes, behaviour and
personal development
Attendance
Support, guidance and pupils'
welfare
Partnership with parents and the
community
Leadership

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social
and cultural development
Efficiency
Staffing, accommodation and
resources

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The percentage of children reaching the higher than expected level of attainment (level 5) is above the national average in science and well above the national average in mathematics. Attainment observed in English lessons is well above average, especially in reading.
- The unit for hearing-impaired children is very good.
- Teaching is good or very good in over two thirds of lessons.
- The children's behaviour is exemplary.
- Relationships, children's attitudes to work and attendance are very good.
- Very good financial controls.
- Very good procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline, good behaviour and attendance.
- Good school ethos.
- Leadership offers a clear educational direction for the school.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment in religious education is below that which is expected according to the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- II. Teachers' day to day assessments and their lesson plans are unsatisfactory. Work, especially for the higher and lower attaining children, is not matched well to children's precise needs. There are no formal systems to monitor the quality of teaching to identify such weaknesses and set targets for improvement. Nor are there systems to monitor the impact of new initiatives on teaching, children's attainment and progress.
- III. The role of the subject co-ordinators, especially the co-ordinator for special educational needs in the main school, is underdeveloped. Subject co-ordinators do not have a clear idea of how their subject is taught. The co-ordinator for children with special educational needs in the main school is unable to influence, monitor and evaluate provision for such children in each class.
- IV. Children with special educational needs in the main school are withdrawn from lessons, which hinders their access to the full curriculum. Some teachers take little responsibility for planning and supporting work that links to the targets in their individual education plans.
- V. Statutory requirements with regard to appraisal of teachers, the provision of swimming and governor reports on progress on the post inspection action plan are not met.
- VI. The school's strategic development plan, for its future development, takes too little account of the changing characteristics of the school and the substantial budget surplus.
- VII. Parents receive insufficient information about what is taught in the school and there are few formal arrangements for them to discuss their child's attainment and progress with the teachers.

The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well, but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of children at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Improvement in the unit for hearing-impaired

children is very good. Teaching is consistently good in the unit so those children make good progress in the National Curriculum and acquire effective communication skills. Progress is good in music and science and in design and technology it is satisfactory. Schemes of work have been extended to identify clearly the knowledge, skills and understanding children are to learn in each year group. This good planning, for continuity in children's learning, gives teachers a clear idea of what is to be taught and when. Procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress are satisfactory. They are closely linked to the National Curriculum levels for each year group and help teachers to track children's progress over time. Some procedures are new and have yet to be used to change teachers' long term curriculum plans. Information collected from various kinds of assessment is not used sufficiently to match work to children's needs. Two points, from 1996, still require attention. There are few opportunities for co-ordinators to work alongside teachers to support and monitor the work in their subjects. Systematic procedures to monitor the work of the school, especially teaching and the implementation of numeracy and literacy, have yet to be fully established. The school is on target to meet the realistic targets set for more children to reach expected and higher than expected levels. Its capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

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· **Standards in subjects**

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

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

The grades for all schools, includes all the children with statements of special educational need, including those attending the unit for hearing-impairment. The grades for similar schools take into account all children in the main school, including those with statements of special educational need, but not those attending the unit for hearing-impairment. This is because there are few junior schools with this kind of specialist unit.

The information shows that in 1999, standards were in line with the national average in English mathematics and above average in science when compared to schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, standards were average in English and science but below average in mathematics.

However, this information does not show that the percentage of children reaching the higher than expected level, level 5, was in line with the national average in English, above average in science and well above average in mathematics when compared to all schools. Currently, in lesson observations, attainment in English is well above the national average, with a real strength in reading.

In mathematics and science attainment is above the national average. Attainment in information and communication technology is in line with the national average. It is below the expectation of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education.

Attainment on entry varies. Attainment for children in the current Year 6 was above average but in the current Years 3 and 4 it is average. From these differing starting points children make good progress in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and music. Progress in information and communication technology is good in lessons now that the new computer suite has been installed. Over time, progress has been slower as resources have been limited. Progress in art, design and technology, and physical education is satisfactory. Progress in religious education is satisfactory in lessons but unsatisfactory over time. In the unit for hearing-impaired, children make good progress. Children with special educational needs and lower attainers in the main school make unsatisfactory progress in whole class lessons, as work is not matched well to their particular needs.

· **Quality of teaching**

Teaching in 7 – 11 years

English	Good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Information technology	Good
Religious education	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Good

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 98.86 per cent of lessons. In 1.1 per cent it is excellent and in 14.8 per cent it is very good. 57.7 per cent is good. It is unsatisfactory in 1.1 per cent.

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	Exemplary. This has a very positive impact on children's learning. Children's personal development is good.
Attendance	Very good and consistently above the national average.
Ethos*	Good. There is a good climate for learning enhanced by children's very positive attitudes towards learning. Relationships are very good.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory. There is a clear educational direction for the school in the short term. However, support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development is insufficient.
Curriculum	Satisfactory. Planning for continuity in children's learning is good. However, the organisation of the curriculum means some children withdrawn from lessons do not have full access to it.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision for children with hearing impairment is very good. Procedures for meeting the needs of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school are unsatisfactory.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good. However, there is little provision for learning the skills of citizenship.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory. There are a good number of teachers and teaching assistants to meet the needs of the curriculum. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are unsatisfactory. Teaching assistants in the main school take much of the responsibility for children with special educational needs with little training. Accommodation is good.
Value for money	Satisfactory. Resources are efficiently managed.

**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

- VIII. Children achieve a good standard of work.
- IX. Very high standards of behaviour are consistently achieved.
- X. The values and attitudes promoted by the school have a very positive influence on their children.
- XI. Children with hearing impairment and English as an additional language are integrated well into the school.
- XII. Children receive good quality advice and guidance.
- XIII. Individual queries by parents are dealt with in a helpful manner.

What some parents are not happy about

- XIV. Parents receive little information about
- XV. The limited number of formal opportunities progress.
- XVI. Provision for physical education
- XVII. There are few after school clubs.
- XVIII. The quality and range of literature for 6 are insufficient.
- XIX. Children with special educational needs find it hard to keep up with the work. This is because it does

Inspectors' judgements support the parents' very positive views. It is true that the school provides little information for parents with regard to what is taught. There are opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress, but these are often informal or require parents to contact the school first. The school issues few formal invitations for parents to meet with their child's teacher to discuss their child's attainment and progress. Provision for physical education meets the current National Curriculum requirements except in swimming. The small number of out of school clubs is well supported and provides a varied range of activities. The quality and range of children's literature for the older children are limited. Children with special educational needs, in the main school, do find it hard to keep up with the work when it does not meet their needs.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To raise all teaching to the level of the best and raise standards of attainment, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- 1 Establish formal systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching including the implementation of new initiatives and its impact on children's attainment and progress by:
 - i) developing a regular programme of lesson observations, each with a clear focus, to be carried out by the headteacher;
 - ii) enabling co-ordinators to fulfil a more effective role in helping to raise standards so they have a clear idea of how their subject is being taught;
 - iii) ensuring that the assessments teachers make of children's learning are fully reflected in their daily lesson plans. This is to enable teachers to set work that meets the needs of all children, especially for the higher attainers and children with special educational needs; and use the plenary sessions in literacy and numeracy effectively to assess children's learning and influence work set in future lessons;
 - iv) raising attainment in religious education to meet standards in the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

(Paragraphs: 37, 40, 43, 54, 76, 82, 83, 102, 104, 109, 110, 160-166)

- 1 Review procedures for meeting special educational needs in the mainstream school making sure that:
 - i) the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator meets the requirements of the

National Code of Practice for special educational needs;

- ii) all class teachers take their full responsibility for children with special educational needs as required under the Code of Practice;
- iii) withdrawal of children from lessons for special help does not prejudice their access to the full curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 10, 21, 35, 44, 48, 50, 51, 56, 63, 80, 107)

1 Meet statutory requirements with regard to:

- i) the appraisal of teachers as set out in circular 12/91;
- ii) the provision of swimming to enable all children to swim the required 25 metres before they leave the school;
- iii) the annual governors' report to parents. Governors are required to report each year on absence rates and the progress that the school has made on the post inspection action plan.

(Paragraphs: 15, 46, 69, 75, 86, 155)

1 Develop a strategic plan for the school's long-term development, which takes into account the changing characteristics of the school, and the projects planned to spend the substantial budget surplus.

(Paragraph: 92)

2 Provide more information for parents about what is taught in the school and increase the number of formally arranged opportunities for parents to discuss their child's attainment and progress with the class teacher.

(Paragraph: 69)

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

- i) enhance further the skills of teaching assistants, especially those in the main school, through a proper development programme; (Paragraphs: 87)
- ii) make provision for children to learn about citizenship. (Paragraph: 60)

ii) **INTRODUCTION**

ii)

ii) **Characteristics of the school**

1 There have been changes to the characteristics of Mildmay Junior School since the previous inspection, especially with regard to the social and economic circumstances in the area. The school serves a large housing estate on the eastern side of Chelmsford. Many of these houses are privately owned but an increasing number have been purchased by housing associations. The number of children in the main school on the stages of assessment as set out in the National Code of Practice and with a statement of special educational need has increased. There is clear evidence to show that while the attainment on entry of the children in the current Year 6 is above average, the attainment on entry of the current Years 3 and 4 is average.

2 As at the time of the previous inspection, the school is a larger than average junior school. There are 300 children on roll, with slightly more girls than boys. Incorporated within the school is a unit for 18 hearing-impaired children aged seven to eleven years. The school has fourteen full-time teachers, including the headteacher, and five part-time teachers. In addition there are 12 teaching assistants. Children are taught in 11 single age classes.

3 Most of the children who attend the school live within walking distance, although some that

attend the unit for hearing-impaired children come from further afield. Most children transfer to the school from Mildmay Infant School that shares the same site. 3.8 per cent of the children receive free school meals, which is below the national average. The school identifies 61 children as having special educational needs, 24 of whom have statements of specific educational need. This is well above the national average. 18 children with statements are on the roll of the unit for hearing-impaired children. Six more children with statements for a variety of special educational needs, are fully integrated into classes in the main school. 3.4 percent of children come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Five children have English as an additional language, which is higher than in most schools. There is no need for specific provision for these children.

The main aims and priorities of the school

4 The school aims to provide a happy, secure environment in which every child has the opportunity to thrive and develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically, according to their individual abilities and needs. The school endeavours to enable each child to:

-) achieve their academic potential;
-) have equal opportunities in all areas of school life;
-) have access to an environment which is caring and demanding of high standards;
-) be happy, self-confident and well behaved;
-) be independent, co-operative, confident and reflective learners;
-) become thoughtful, caring and responsible members of society who take pride in caring for their environment.

Priorities for 1999-2000 include:

-) raising attainment in information and communication technology;
-) successfully implement the numeracy hour;
-) improving the implementation of the assessment policy.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	45	78

¹ Percentage in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	25	27	30
at NC Level 4 or	Girls	35	31	38
above	Total	60	58	68
Percentage at NC	School	74(80)	74 (78)	86 (83)
Level 4 or above	National	70(65)	69 (59)	78 (69)
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	26	28	32
at NC Level 4 or	Girls	36	32	37
above	Total	62	60	69
Percentage at NC	School	78 (82)	76 (80)	87 (83)
Level 4 or above	National	67 (65)	69(65)	75 (72)

· **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
	Absence	National comparative data	4.4
	Unauthorised	School	5.7
	Absence	National comparative data	0.0
			0.5

· **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

· **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	15.91
Satisfactory or better	98.86
Less than satisfactory	1.14

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PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5 On entry to the school, children have attainment that is broadly in line with the national average. This is lower than at the time of the previous inspection, when it was above average. This stems from the socio-economic changes to the area and the increasing number of children with special educational needs in the main school. Attainment on entry differs according to the age group.

For example, attainment on entry of the children in the current Years 3 and 4 is in line with the national average while that for the current Year 6 was above average. Overall children make good progress. It is better in Years 3 and 4 where it is good, than in Year 6 where it is satisfactory. Analysis of standardised test results by the school, to predict children's attainment levels at the end of the key stage, suggests that more children are attaining expected or higher than expected levels of attainment than might otherwise be expected.

6 Standards at the time of the previous inspection were said to be 'broadly in line with standards nationally', although there were variations between subjects and individual classes. Lesson observations indicate that current attainment is above the national average at the age of eleven. They show that attainment in English is well above the national average and above the national average in mathematics and science. Attainment in information and communication technology is in line with national expectations. In religious education it is below the standards required by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Unlike the last inspection, there is less variation between subjects but there is still some variation between individual classes depending on the quality of teaching.

7 By age eleven, children's attainments in the 1999 national tests, when compared to all schools were in line with the national average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The percentage of children reaching higher than expected levels of attainment (level 5) was close to the national average in English and well above average in mathematics and above average in science. The percentage of children reaching the expected level 4 or above when compared to similar schools was average in English and science and below average in mathematics.

8 Over time attainment has varied. Between 1996 and 1997 standards rose steeply, much faster than the national trend. They continued to rise in English in 1998, again at a rate faster than the national trend. Although they remained well above average, standards in mathematics and science dropped towards the national average faster than the national trend. At the present time, there is evidence of a continued rise in the percentage of children reaching the higher than expected level, level 5, in mathematics and science.

9 Between 1996 and 1998, in comparison to the national averages, the performance of girls and boys was well above the national average. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in English, although there is some evidence to show that boys do slightly better than girls in mathematics and girls do slightly better than boys in science.

1 The changes in attainment in the average National Curriculum levels over time stem from:

- clear differences in the abilities between each year group. For instance, the number of children in Year 6 who have statements of special educational need both in the main school and unit for hearing-impaired children rises and falls in successive years. This has an impact on the percentage figures for the whole school that are reported. That said, some children in the unit for hearing-impaired children are successful in reaching expected and higher than expected levels of attainment and were particularly successful in 1997;

- unsatisfactory lesson planning in the main school. Teachers take too little account of children's differing needs. Very few teachers, especially in Year 6, set work at different levels to meet the range of ability in each class. This impacts on progress as both higher and lower attaining children are provided with work that is either too easy or too hard and does not meet their immediate needs. This makes it hard for lower attaining children to keep up;
- most teachers in the main school take little responsibility for children with special educational needs in their classes. Much of the teaching of these children is delegated to a part-time teacher or teaching assistants who do their best to help the children carry out the task set for the rest of the class.

11 Literacy skills are used well across the curriculum. Children's very good reading skills enable them to undertake research to find the information they need quickly from books as part of their class work or homework. Children know and use vocabulary for each subject well. They are keen to share their ideas well when working in small groups and are confident when speaking in front of the class. In contrast, children's above average mathematical skills are hardly used across the curriculum. For example, in design and technology, children rarely show measurements on their designs for coin holders or slippers, to give them a good idea of the size of the item they are intending to make. Information and communication technology is rarely used to help children read and interpret data collected in mathematics.

12 The good standards in science represent a rise in standards from the previous inspection. By the time they leave the school, children have good knowledge of facts and technical terms relating to all aspects of the science curriculum. With the help of the teachers, children carry out experiments and make predictions about their outcome. However, there are few opportunities for children to devise and conduct experiments of their own.

13 Information and communication technology is an improving subject. Attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of the key stage. Teachers use the newly installed computer suite well to enhance children's skills in the subject. At the age of eleven, children have confident keyboard skills and use the tools in the various software programmes effectively. Attainment is higher in Years 3 and 4 where teachers have more confidence in teaching the subject and children are more familiar with the computers and software that has been installed. Information and communication technology is not yet used sufficiently to enhance skills in all other areas of the curriculum across the school.

14 Attainment in religious education is below the standards expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. At the time of the previous inspection they were in line with expectations and this represents a decline in standards. Children have a sound understanding of Christianity but their knowledge of other major world faiths is superficial.

15 Strengths in attainment in other subjects at the end of the key stage include samples of good artwork in the style of Picasso, William Morris, Lowry and Van Gogh. Standards in design and technology have improved as children cover a broader programme which includes, cooking biscuits and making sandwiches and artefacts to their own design. In geography, children have a good understanding of map keys and symbols as well as grid references to find places that they know. Children's above average literacy skills enable them to develop historical research skills and increase their knowledge of different historical periods such as Victorian times. Children sing traditional songs sensitively. Many children can read music and use this knowledge well to compose their own tunes. In physical education, children cover a broad programme. The weakness is in swimming, as it was not taught in the year prior to the inspection. There are plans to teach it in future.

Progress

16 Overall, children make good progress as they move through the school. Progress in Year 6 is satisfactory. Sometimes children make very good progress but much depends on the quality of the teaching. This is particularly true for higher and lower attaining children.

1 Children make very good progress when:

- teachers have a clear focus for each lesson which they share effectively with the children. This helps children to build well on their previous work and make very good gains in knowledge and skills;
- teaching points are revised throughout the lesson and at the end, which reminds children about what they have learned;
- teachers use their good long and medium term planning effectively so that work is more demanding year on year;
- teachers challenge children to think hard about what they are doing;
- effective questioning consolidates and extends learning.

18 There are examples of very good progress in the acquisition of information and communication technology skills in Year 3, mathematics, history and English in Year 4, music in Year 5 and art in Year 6. Children make good progress in science, with over one third reaching higher than expected levels. This is a significant improvement over the previous inspection where progress was said to vary across the year groups. In English and mathematics progress is good. Children make clear gains in their literacy skills and in basic arithmetic.

19 Overall progress in music, especially notation, information and communication technology, geography and history is good. In art, physical education and design and technology progress is satisfactory. Progress is satisfactory in religious education lessons but it is unsatisfactory over time.

20 Hearing-impaired children, both in the unit and in mainstream classes, make good progress, although their attainment overall, is below expectation. The progress of children in the unit is good as a result of clear target setting informed by children's individual education plans. Teachers provide a good and appropriate interpretation of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Hearing-impaired children integrated into mainstream classes benefit from good quality support and access to the full National Curriculum. As a result they attain standards broadly in line with national averages, especially in reading.

21 Progress of children with special educational needs in the main school is variable. When children are withdrawn from lessons to work in small groups with the special educational needs co-ordinator, they make good progress in literacy skills as they are taught well. However, as they are withdrawn from lessons such as numeracy, science, design and technology, for additional tuition in literacy, their progress across the curriculum is hindered.

22 In whole class lessons including literacy, numeracy and science, progress of lower attaining children and those with special educational needs in mainstream classes is patchy. This is because most teachers, particularly in Year 6, take too little account of children's individual needs when setting work. Work set is often too hard for them. Most class teachers make few checks on what these children know and can do. Teachers lack the knowledge to help the children meet the targets set out in their individual education plans. Children with English as an additional language make good progress. They are well motivated and listen very carefully to what the teacher is saying.

23 The very high standard of behaviour has a significant impact on children's progress as it means there is a good atmosphere for learning without interruption. This allows children to concentrate, think about what they are doing and complete substantial amounts of work in the time available.

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Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

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24 Parents are delighted with the high standards of behaviour and with the attitudes and values that the school promotes successfully. Such features, which are a strength of the school, have a very positive impact on children's learning. This reflects a consolidation of the commendable position outlined in the previous report.

25 Children show very good attitudes to learning. During whole class lessons they listen attentively and join in discussions with interest. Children work hard and show good levels of concentration. When working in small groups, they collaborate well in lessons such as science and physical education. The previous report stated that some children were inattentive because tasks in some lessons were insufficiently challenging. It remains the case that some higher attaining children are insufficiently challenged and lower attainers find the work hard. However, there has been improvement as children sustain their concentration well and remain on task, even when the lesson is dull. Teachers provide good opportunities for developing enquiry and investigative skills, especially in homework and during history lessons. For example, Year 6 children undertook research about the working conditions for children in Victorian times.

26 Children with special educational needs both in the main school and unit for hearing-impaired children have very good attitudes to their work. They are keen to do well and always do their best to produce good work. The very positive, supportive and purposeful ethos in the unit has a powerful influence on the children which promotes very good attitudes to learning and gives the children high self-esteem and confidence. Children work very hard to meet the targets in their individual education plans.

27 Behaviour standards throughout the school are excellent. Children respond well to the school's high expectations of good behaviour in lessons, assemblies and in the dining hall and playgrounds. The incidence of serious misbehaviour is very low and bullying rarely occurs. There have been no exclusions over the last three years. Children are trustworthy and courteous. They help to keep the school environment tidy.

28 Children's relationships with adults and with one another are very good both in the main school and unit for hearing-impaired children. Staff help to maintain a friendly, purposeful and caring atmosphere. This is reflected in the co-operative attitudes which children show when undertaking the full range of daily activities. A very impressive feature is the successful integration of children with hearing impairment into the main school. Other children enjoy conversing with them by signing. The children from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated into the life of the school. Children are polite, helpful to adults and show respect for others. Such high standards mean there is a quiet, industrious atmosphere in many lessons, which allows children to concentrate and work hard.

29 Provision for children's personal development is good. There are many opportunities for children to take on responsibilities and show initiative. This puts right a weakness identified in the last report. Children undertake research in lessons and homework and enjoy problem-solving activities. For example, in information and communication technology, children show initiative in exploring the tools of the software. They express their own ideas when using art programmes as the pictures show originality.

30 A good range of activities enables children to extend their knowledge and develop their self-confidence. Children participate in assemblies, inter-school sporting activities and educational visits.

They organise fund raising events and contribute to different charities. They take part in a small number of school clubs that increases their knowledge of instrumental music, singing and signing as well as sport. In Year 6, all children act as prefects at some stage during the year. During the lunch break, children answer the telephone in the school office and make a note of the caller's name and telephone number if the particular teacher cannot be found quickly. Several Year 6 children undertake cycling proficiency training and some organise the distribution and sale of milk during the morning break. Younger children undertake routine responsibilities including setting out equipment, taking messages and assisting with special events. The choir and instrumentalists perform in school and in public. Parents report that the annual music and drama presentation is extremely successful.

· **Attendance**

31 As at the time of the previous inspection attendance is very good and consistently above the national average. A particularly good feature is the very small amount of unauthorised absence. Children arrive punctually, including those attending the unit for hearing-impaired children, several of whom have a long journey from home. During the day, lessons and other activities start and finish on time. Such features make a very good contribution to children's attainment and progress.

· **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

· **Teaching**

32 The quality of teaching is good and this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, teaching was good in only a quarter of the lessons and very good in a small number. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 98.86 per cent of lessons inspected. In 1.1 per cent it was excellent and in 14.8 per cent it was very good. 57.7 per cent was good and 1.1 per cent unsatisfactory.

33 Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Programmes of Study in all subjects. This helps them to be clear about what they teach and is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is particularly good in history in Year 4, music in Year 5 and art in Year 6. It is good in English, mathematics and science across the school. A few teachers have very good subject knowledge in religious education and information and communication technology. In information and communication technology this is shared well with colleagues so that teaching in the subject is at least satisfactory and often good across all year groups. However, a weakness remains in information technology as most teachers, without the help of the co-ordinator, have insufficient knowledge of a wide range of skills or knowledge of what to do if things go wrong. Subject knowledge in design and technology, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, was good in the lessons seen.

34 In the unit for hearing-impaired children, teachers' subject knowledge is good and sometimes very good. This enables teachers in the unit to present the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in a broad and relevant manner. Their very good signing skills enable them to communicate fully with the children and challenge them to extend their knowledge of the wider world. Teachers take good account of children's individual needs. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

35 In the main school, most teachers' knowledge of ways in which to help lower attaining children and those with particular special educational needs is limited. This often means teaching assistants are asked to take too much responsibility for meeting children's special educational needs. They receive little guidance from class teachers about what the children are to achieve and how they are to achieve it.

36 Teachers' expectations are good. They expect children to work hard and give serious attention to the tasks they are set. Expectations of very good attitudes and excellent behaviour are consistently high. This helps children to stay on task and behave well. Teachers have high expectations that children will do their best and complete their work within the time set. Time targets improve the pace of many lessons so that children cover a substantial amount of work. In the very best lessons, expectations of what children can attain are very high and teachers make very good provision for the needs of all children. However, in many lessons teachers do not give enough attention to planning work to meet the differing needs of children. This means that sometimes expectations are too high. Work set for lower attaining children and those with special educational needs, especially in Year 6, is too hard and they find it difficult to keep up. Expectations for higher attaining children are too low in some classes, especially in science, where teachers do not recognise that some children learn science skills quickly.

37 Teachers' lesson plans are unsatisfactory. During the inspection, lesson plans identified what was to be learned which overcame a weakness in the previous inspection. However, they are not written on a regular basis and give little indication about the tasks and outcomes for children of differing abilities. In the very best lessons teachers make it clear at the beginning of the lesson what children are to learn during the lesson. Throughout the lesson they remind the children about the progress they have made which gives lessons pace and purpose. Lessons are always well prepared and children have the day to day materials they need.

38 Teaching methods are good. Teachers mostly use a balance of whole class, group and individual activities. In Years 3 to 5 there is a very good balance of oral, practical and written work. In Year 6, teachers place greater emphasis on written work in preparation for the national tests. Mostly, work is linked to children's daily lives which makes learning relevant. Teachers are skilled at providing clear explanations but few use questioning effectively to broaden, challenge and deepen children's thinking. They place strong emphasis on teaching and enabling children to use appropriate vocabulary in each subject. However, links between subjects are limited. For example, skills in mathematics are not carried forward to design and technology and information and communication technology.

39 Teachers manage the children very well, often with humour, so that there is a purposeful working atmosphere in the majority of lessons. Many children have confidence to share their humour with teachers too, which adds much to the supportive atmosphere in most lessons. Time and resources are used well to support learning in most subjects. The brisk pace of many lessons, especially in science, history and information and communication technology means children quickly take on new knowledge, skills and understanding that they apply in their work.

40 The quality of teachers' day to day assessment is unsatisfactory. While most teachers make checks on children's progress during lessons, few make use of children's successful work to draw learning together at the end of the lessons and remind children of what they have learned. Often in literacy and numeracy, the important plenary session at the end of the lesson is omitted. Marking lacks constructive and helpful comments. Few targets are set for children to work towards and improve their work.

41 Teachers make satisfactory use of homework to extend children's knowledge in literacy, numeracy and history. However, the new homework policy has yet to be fully implemented consistently.

42 In the very good lessons, teachers build on the above features. They share their expertise with children very well and use very imaginative approaches. In a Year 4 lesson, for instance, when children were developing their skills in questioning, the teacher took on the role of Queen Victoria. The children asked many challenging and thoughtful questions which did much to develop their speaking and listening skills as well as their historical knowledge. In a Year 6 art lesson, children were able to draw a landscape scene using perspective. The teacher took the children through the lesson step by step, giving new knowledge and allowing time for them to reflect on what had been said and apply the new knowledge to their picture. In these ways, teachers catch children's interest by making learning real. They build children's basic understanding by planning exciting learning experiences.

43 In the unsatisfactory lesson, tasks lack challenge and interest for the children. Explanations are long and provide few opportunities for children to practise the skills being taught. Tasks do not meet children's needs.

44 The quality of teaching for children with special educational needs in the main school varies. Children, withdrawn for small group work with the special educational needs co-ordinator, benefit from good, skilled teaching which has good pace and high expectations. In some classes with very good teaching, teachers clearly differentiate materials, are aware of children's learning targets and use classroom support effectively as a way of allowing children with special educational needs to have full access to the curriculum. In other classes, teachers do not set work that matches particular needs. Teachers do not set targets for children on Stage 1 of the special educational needs assessment process, which is unsatisfactory and does not match the National Code of Practice for special educational needs.

45 In the unit for hearing-impaired children the quality of teaching is good, sometimes very good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Skilled and experienced specialist teachers plan work carefully. They take great care to take into account children's different learning needs. The pace of lessons is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which gives lessons a clear sense of purpose and direction. Teachers use an effective total communication approach, and use their very good signing skills, to enable them to communicate fully with children. In doing so they question and challenge children to extend their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. One of the many strengths of the unit is the strong ethos of teamwork between teachers and the very good team of teaching assistants, including a communicator. This, along with the excellent relationships the staff and children enjoy, contributes very powerfully to the good and very good teaching which occurs in the unit. Teachers in mainstream classes are fully accepting and sensitive to the needs of hearing-impaired children when they are integrated into school.

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The curriculum and assessment

46 As at the time of the previous inspection, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth, balance and relevance to children's lives. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, although the time provided for teaching religious education is inconsistent throughout the school. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects except physical education. Swimming was not taught as part of the physical education programme in the year prior to the inspection. The food element within design and technology is now included in the scheme of work, which puts right, a previous weakness. An appropriate programme for health education and drugs awareness is incorporated effectively into the science scheme of work. Governors have decided that sex education

should not be included in the curriculum but older children receive advice about puberty.

47 A key issue in the last inspection was, 'to extend the existing schemes of work to identify more clearly the knowledge, skills and understanding to be developed at each stage'. The school has worked hard, successfully, to put this right. Planning in the long and medium term is good. Schemes of work have been updated in the light of recent national guidelines and teachers know what is to be taught and when. These, together with attention to guidance on what is to be taught in the literacy and numeracy sessions, help teachers to build well on children's prior attainment. The schemes of work give teachers practical help in planning their work. Teachers have a clear idea of the amount of work that needs to be covered each week and this adds good pace to lessons and children's learning. That said, the programme for religious education is not implemented on a regular basis in all classes. Teachers collaborate very effectively in Years 3, 4 and 5 to ensure that coverage is similar for children of the same ages in the different classes. This too puts right a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection.

48 Children are taught in classes of similar age groups. Some teachers take responsibility for teaching their specialist subject, such as physical education, religious education and music, to other classes. All teachers take responsibility for teaching literacy and numeracy to their own class. While these subjects are effectively taught, the organisation of the curriculum does not ensure that all children have equal access to it. The school has implemented some of the ideas from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, but in some classes, especially in Year 6 and Year 4, there is very little group work. All children work on the same activities. Higher attaining children are often not fully challenged because tasks are not designed to meet their needs. Some children do not receive their full entitlement to aspects of the curriculum because they are withdrawn from lessons for extra work in literacy. The practice of withdrawing children was pointed out in the previous inspection. It has been monitored to make sure children do not regularly miss the same lessons, but some children are withdrawn from mathematics for additional work in literacy and this time cannot be caught up. The games curriculum in Years 5 and 6 has been reviewed successfully so that all children have access to all areas of activity.

49 Provision for children with special needs in the unit for hearing-impaired children is very good. The curriculum for these children is very broad, balanced and relevant to the children's needs. All areas of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. The Programmes of Study are appropriately adapted to meet the children's special needs. Communication activities are given appropriate emphasis and are always incorporated into all curriculum experiences. Developments in this area have been very successful and the weakness found in the previous inspection has been corrected.

50 Provision for children with special educational needs in the main school is unsatisfactory. This is because most teachers take too little responsibility for planning and organising the work of these children to meet their specific needs. There is very little consultation between the special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and teaching assistants to ensure the good targets set in children's individual education plans are linked closely to their work in the classroom. Parents are correct in their view that work is too hard for them and they find it difficult to keep up, especially in Year 6.

51 The special educational needs co-ordinator is unable to undertake the wide range of activities which are required by the National Code of Practice for special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator is part-time, working on two days a week. The co-ordinator uses these two days to give additional language and literacy lessons to small groups of children. Although these children benefit from skilled teaching, they are withdrawn from other areas of the

curriculum. With a heavy teaching timetable the special educational needs co-ordinator is unable to be sufficiently influential across the school by monitoring, evaluating and supporting classroom practice.

52 Children with English as an additional language in the main school are effectively supported in class and teaching methods enable them to learn much from their friends. As a result there is no need for specific provision for them.

53 Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory and enhances the children's personal development and attainment in sports, music and signing. Clubs and activities take place at the beginning and end of the school day. Taken together, these clubs are well supported by children, especially in Years 5 and 6. A residential school journey with an adventurous as well as an academic content, outings, visits to places of interest, and concerts does much to enhance children's personal development.

54 Systems to check and record individual attainment, especially in English, mathematics and science are satisfactory. Assessment was not a strong feature of the school's work at the time of the previous inspection. The key issue was to 'improve the procedures for assessment and recording, relating them more closely to the level and end of key stage descriptions, and use assessment more frequently to assess pupils' attainment and progress and inform teacher's planning'. Much work has been done to improve the procedures for assessment, track children's progress and predict levels of attainment at the end of the key stage. There is a coherent system for assessing and recording children's progress. The end of year records show clearly teacher assessments of children's progress linked to National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science. Reading tests are administered twice a year to see the progress children are making. Optional national tests are administered in English and mathematics at the end of Years 3 to 5. These give teachers a clear view of what children know and can do and compare their attainment to other children throughout the country. The headteacher analyses these in detail, but class teachers make little use of the information to help them plan for children's varying needs. In other subjects teachers evaluate the work they have done at the end of a series of lessons and suggest how the tasks might be altered in future. These are too new to have had an impact on teachers' planning. There are few records to indicate detailed progress especially in information and communication technology and religious education.

55 As at the time of the previous inspection it is true to say that the value and benefits of assessment are not clearly understood by all the teaching staff. Few teachers use assessment well to inform curriculum planning and this aspect remains unsatisfactory. This is reflected in the lack of planning for different tasks for children of varying abilities in many classes. Some teachers evaluate their lessons in detail and note changes that need to be made to ensure children revise work they found difficult or move on quickly from work that they found too easy. They make changes to their lesson plans so that children have time to consolidate new skills and knowledge or take on new learning at a faster rate. In these classes children's progress is very good. In other classes, assessment remains insufficiently linked to the lesson objectives, as teachers do not write daily lesson plans on a regular basis. Opportunities to revise or check what children have learned at the end of each lesson are missed. Work is marked regularly, but in most classes it gives children very little guidance on how to improve. This hinders the progress of all children.

· 56 Identification and assessment procedures in the area of special educational needs both in the unit for hearing-impaired children and in the main school are effective and reflect the requirements of the National Code of Practice. Children in the unit have clear learning targets and these are taken fully into account when planning work. Children's progress towards these targets is regularly reviewed and changes made to meet needs. In the main school, the special educational needs co-ordinator has ensured all children identified as having special educational needs have clear learning targets. These have been given to teachers but few take them into account when planning lessons.

· **Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

57 At the time of the last inspection the school's provision for spiritual and moral development was found to be good. This is still the case. Provision for the children's social and cultural development is now also good.

58 Much of the provision for spiritual development lies in the assembly and religious education programmes. In assemblies children learn to appreciate the rights and needs of others, and to develop a sense of responsibility towards them. These are quiet and reverent occasions. In one moving assembly a local minister spoke to the children about his experiences working with the poor in India. He showed slides of the conditions in which poor people were living. He helped the children understand that all people are part of one family, with mutual responsibilities. In the religious education programme children learn a little about the beliefs of other faith groups. They learn respect for differences in beliefs and traditions, and are encouraged to refine their own beliefs and values. In other parts of the curriculum, children express their feeling of wonder, gratitude and humility. For example, they wrote movingly of the temporary cessation of hostilities between British and German forces on Christmas Day during the First World War, and with feeling about the plight of poor working children in Victorian England.

59 The school day, and the good example of the teachers, provides many opportunities for children's understanding of right and wrong to be further developed. Parents are rightly very appreciative of the school's work in this area. In a lesson on leadership, a class discussed the values of honesty, trustworthiness, and personal integrity. In another, they constructed their own "commandments" as rules for living. Fairness and openness mark the teachers' dealings with the children and give good models of ethical behaviour.

60 Many opportunities are provided to accelerate children's social development. The closeness of the integration of children from the unit for hearing-impaired children is a particular strength in this area. The school, through its strong ethos, fully and successfully promotes the acceptance of difference and disability. The behaviour policy is operated consistently and with very good results. All children in Year 6 have a turn as prefects, taking a wider responsibility in the school community. Children conduct the daily sale of milk and account for the money collected. In one class children discussed with the teacher the skills they needed if they were to work productively in a small group. The Year 5 residential trip to Ringsfield Hall is an established part of the programme and gives children an opportunity to experience community living away from home. Children accept a wider social responsibility and a number of charities are supported each year. The school has not yet begun to develop a planned approach to the teaching and learning of citizenship despite this being noted as a shortcoming in the previous report.

61 Provision for children's cultural development is strong in literature, music and art. Poetry, novels and plays by classic writers such as Shakespeare and modern writers such as Philip Ridley feature vividly in displays around the school. Together with the annual Book Week, these motivate children to read more widely. Children have a chance to learn the recorder and to sing in a choir. They recently enjoyed a visit by West Indian drummers. Very good displays of the work of established artists, such as Cezanne and Lowry, often accompany the children's own paintings in a similar style. Visits out of school also help the children develop a sense of the culture of their local

community. Groups have visited Oaklands Museum and local studies are carried out in history and geography.

· **Support, guidance and pupils welfare**

62 Provision for children's support, welfare and guidance is good. Parents are very appreciative of the caring and supportive atmosphere provided. This makes a helpful contribution to children's learning and personal development.

63 The systems for monitoring children's progress and personal development are satisfactory. Children's progress and personal achievements are outlined clearly in the annual reports to parents. Results in national tests are carefully analysed by the headteacher. Regular tests have been introduced to measure and check children's attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of each year. However, there is little provision for setting children clear individual targets to improve their rate of progress. The monitoring of children's academic and personal development in the unit for hearing-impaired children is very good. In the main school, procedures for special educational needs are variable. In the best practice, by the special educational needs co-ordinator and a few teachers, procedures are very effective. In other cases, teachers give insufficient attention to children with special educational needs. They delegate their responsibility for them to teaching assistants.

64 The arrangements for promoting attendance and punctuality are very good. Parents are well advised about the school's expectations and procedures. Registration work is undertaken well and the procedures for following up absences are efficient. There is good co-operation with the education welfare officer who visits each term.

65 Very good practices are in place for promoting discipline and good behaviour. The behaviour policy has been updated and now includes provision to prevent bullying. Teachers and other staff show a consistent approach to behaviour management. They work hard but unobtrusively to ensure the high expectations are achieved. Children are aware of their responsibilities and respond well. The rewards system of praise, commendations and team points is very effective. The few incidents of serious misbehaviour, including bullying, are dealt with quickly and fairly.

66 The arrangements for children's well being, health and safety are good. There is a consistent approach throughout the school. Illness and accidents are well managed by staff who have received first-aid training. Effective systems ensure that child protection issues are dealt with well and there is good liaison with the specialist agencies. Drugs education is provided as part of the health education programme. Governors have decided that sex education should not be included in the curriculum. However, good advice about puberty is given to older children. For physical education lessons, separate changing facilities are available for older girls.

67 Safety issues receive high priority. During lessons children exercise due care when handling materials and equipment. The previous report identified a need for a risk assessment strategy and for investigations into possible safety hazards. These related to the unprotected drop from the corridor at the end of the school hall and to the condition of gymnastics mats. The risk assessment procedures are appropriate and are included in the up-dated health and safety policy. Specialist advice is sought when required and an annual report on safety inspections is submitted to the governors' premises committee. Since the school was opened, there have been no accidents as a result of the 'unprotected drop'. Advice from a consultant in 1996 was that no action was needed. The mats used for gymnastics meet the education authority's safety requirements.

· **Partnership with parents and the community**

68 Partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory. Parents are very pleased with many aspects of the school's work, including the educational standards achieved. However, over a quarter of those responding to the questionnaire feel there is a need for parents to receive better information about children's learning. Inspection evidence indicates that such representations are justified.

69 The quality of information given to parents in the main school is unsatisfactory and good in the unit for hearing-impaired children. Nevertheless, in the main school, there are a number of good features. Newsletters give useful information about forthcoming events. However, parents are not informed about what is taught in school. Nor are they informed about changes to the curriculum, such as the implementation of the literacy and numeracy sessions. Individual queries raised by parents are dealt with in a helpful and constructive manner. Annual written reports to parents on their child's attainment and progress give good advice and indicate areas for development. Parents are encouraged, and some take the opportunity, to arrange to speak to teachers informally about their child and concerns they may have. That said, formal arrangements to invite parents to meet with class teachers to discuss their child's progress are limited. The prospectus and the governors' annual report provide much helpful information about the school. However, written information about progress on the school's post inspection action plan and the percentages for authorised and unauthorised absence have been omitted from the governors' report.

70 Parents' involvement in children's learning is satisfactory. Some parents help with school events, including educational visits. Meetings are held to advise parents about the transfer of children from the infant school in to Year 3 and Year 6 children to secondary schools.

71 Most parents are very supportive of the homework arrangements. The well-established programme for regular reading at home has a very positive influence on attainment. Homework is set and this allows children to find things out with the help of their parents. Following consultation with parents, the newly adopted home/school agreement provides for an 'appropriate' amount of homework to be set, rather than defining a fixed time per week for different year groups.

72 The parents' association takes an active role in supporting the work of the school. A full programme of fund raising events is supported well. Functions for the community and children's enjoyment are well attended. The association makes substantial financial donations to the school for the provision of equipment, such as additional computers and other educational resources.

73 The school has satisfactory links with the local community. There is close Cupertino with the infant school on the same site and with the secondary schools to which most Year 6 children transfer. Arrangements for the future education of Year 6 children in the unit for hearing-impairment are handled with sensitivity and understanding. A planned programme of educational visits supports curriculum work especially in music, history and geography.

74 Although there is little involvement with industry, there is good Cupertino with the local shopkeepers, several of whom give support to events organised at the school. Children attend services at Galleywood Church and Chelmsford Cathedral and are given talks by local clergy. Children from secondary schools carry out their work experience in the school. University and college students work in school as part of their training programme. Very good support is given to charitable organisations.

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· **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

· **Leadership and management**

75 Leadership is satisfactory. The previous inspection report said that the governing body was very supportive and had a strong commitment to the school. This continues to be so. Governors know the school well and play an increasingly significant part in providing positive leadership and helping to raise standards. Governors give generously of their time, are well informed and conduct their business efficiently. They meet regularly and have a good structure of committees. They take an appropriate interest in curriculum developments, for example the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and special educational needs. They are not yet involved in monitoring the quality of education. Most legal requirements are met, although no swimming lessons were held last year. In addition, the governors' annual report to parents does not include information about progress on the school's action plan following the previous inspection, or percentages of children's authorised and unauthorised absence.

76 The headteacher has a sensitive and supportive approach to leadership as was reported in the previous inspection. This has done much to enhance relationships within the school and move it forward. He is aware of the current needs of the school and is anxious to raise standards. The time is now right to use an urgent, determined and rigorous management style. The headteacher meets regularly with the deputy headteacher. However, there is no formal senior management team. As a result, an important mechanism for sharing a very clear educational direction for the school, and for driving improvements at a faster rate as well as monitoring teaching and learning, is missing. As yet few staff have recognised the changes to the characteristics of the school and the need to review lesson plans and assessments to enhance children's attainment and progress.

77 The school has a good ethos, which is promoted successfully by the governing body, headteacher and staff. It is based on valuing and caring for every child and enhances the quality of relationships. Staff successfully encourage children to have very good attitudes towards their work. Good routines have been established and the school runs smoothly each day. Administration is good and this enables other staff to get on with their jobs. Parents are happy about the values and attitudes the school promotes and feel they have a very positive influence.

78 The implementation of the school's aims, values and policies is satisfactory. The school has agreed and published aims that include enabling every child to achieve their potential. They are summarised in its prospectus, but do not give a really strong emphasis to promoting high attainment and raising standards. A similar comment was made in the previous inspection report. The school's equal opportunities policy, produced after the last inspection, has not been reviewed since then. At present the school does not always ensure that higher and lower attaining children are given work appropriate to their needs. Also when children are withdrawn from subjects other than literacy for additional help with reading, their access to the full curriculum is hindered.

79 The unit for hearing-impaired children is managed very well. The teacher in charge is very effective. Since the previous inspection, the teacher in charge of the unit has put together very efficient procedures and a very effective team of staff. Very good management within the unit, along with support from the headteacher, has enabled very good specialist provision for hearing-impaired children to fulfil their potential within the unit and benefit from opportunities to join in lessons in the main school.

80 The management of special educational needs in the main school is unsatisfactory. There is an able and experienced special educational needs co-ordinator and a good draft policy for meeting special educational needs. However, the practice of using all the special needs co-ordinator's time in school as an additional teacher for reading makes it difficult for the wider and essential role of the

special needs co-ordinator to be carried out effectively. The co-ordinator is unable to influence or check on the provision for children with special educational needs in classes in the main school. As a result the approach to assisting children with special educational needs in the main school is inconsistent. Some teachers in Years 3 and 4 are skilled at helping such children, while others delegate their responsibility to teaching assistants.

81 Statutory requirements concerning children with a statement of special educational need are carried out efficiently. Procedures that teachers use and the documentation they collect are good quality. Staff in the unit and the special needs co-ordinator in the main school know children with special educational needs very well and this is a strength of the provision. Teaching assistants both in the unit and in mainstream classes provide sensitive and effective support.

82 The school's overall development plan is a useful tool to guide improvements in the medium term. It was produced essentially by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, but its formulation also included consultation with staff and governors. Weekly staff meetings are held and teachers are provided with satisfactory opportunities to discuss the work of the school. The school has made a satisfactory response to most matters raised in the last inspection, including the extension of schemes of work and improving the quality of teachers' planning. Insufficient progress has been made in establishing formal procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on children's attainment and progress. The headteacher rightly spends time in classrooms, but has no regular programme of lesson observations that result in targets for improvement.

83 Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic about their roles and have influenced planning. The co-ordinator for information and communication technology has been particularly influential in raising standards of attainment and teaching. The literacy hour has been introduced satisfactorily and the new emphasis on numeracy is moving forward effectively. A key issue in the previous inspection report was to increase opportunities for co-ordinators to work alongside other teachers to support and monitor work in their subject. Little progress has been made in establishing such a system. As a result, except in information and communication technology, co-ordinators do not always have a clear idea of how their subject is being taught and they are not yet fully effective in helping to raise standards.

84 The school has set realistic targets for more children to reach expected and higher than expected levels. It is on target to reach them. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

85 Staffing is satisfactory. The number of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of children with hearing impairment is good. Class sizes are small compared to other schools. Staff are appropriately qualified and there is a good range of experience and expertise in most subjects. Two teachers, who liaise regularly to ensure continuity, teach one class. Staff with particular strengths, such as music, teach their subjects to other classes and this improves the quality of curriculum provision. The special needs co-ordinator works part-time in the main school. She takes full responsibility for all children with special educational needs, including those on Stage 1 of the local authority's stages of learning, although this is normally the responsibility of class teachers. Staffing levels for children with hearing impairment are good. The unit is appropriately staffed with three experienced, skilled and qualified teachers of the deaf as well as special support assistants.

86 Arrangements for staff training and professional development are unsatisfactory. The main focus has rightly been on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and staff have attended in-service training on these. However, formal appraisal procedures are not in place and the school is therefore not carrying out its statutory requirements in this respect. Staff development interviews are not held regularly to review and set targets for improvement. Professional development opportunities are used well in the unit for hearing-impaired children as all staff continually enhance their skills to benefit the children.

87 There is a generous number of teaching assistants who work in the main school and the unit for hearing impairment. They support children with special needs and help at special functions and on field trips. Support staff in the unit for hearing impairment are trained well and carry out their duties effectively. Teaching assistants in the main school are not always well briefed about what they are to do, particularly in the early part of the literacy hour. They receive insufficient training to enhance their skills. All work well as a team and contribute significantly to the progress made by children with special educational needs. Children with hearing impairment are ably supported by their communicator who through signing enables them to take part in whole school assemblies and some lessons in the main school. Administrative staff in the office are efficient and well organised, which means that the school runs smoothly on a daily basis.

88 The quality of accommodation is good and meets the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation and siting of the unit for hearing impairment is good and enables children to have easy access to the main school when they are integrated into classes. The unit is a pleasant area with rooms for small group work. A former classroom has been reorganised to provide a well-equipped suite for information and communication technology and this has enhanced attainment significantly in this subject. Displays of children's work brighten up the school. The school grounds are well looked after and good use is made of the available facilities for physical education.

89 Resources are satisfactory. Resources for mathematics include a good range of materials and apparatus to support the National Numeracy Strategy. Resources in information and communication technology, design technology, geography and music are good. They are satisfactory in all other subjects, except in English. There is a shortage of books in the main library and class book collections to support the development of literacy and research skills for older and higher attaining children. The last inspection report also commented on this shortcoming. Sets of textbooks have been purchased for whole class work in English, mathematics and science. Resources for special educational needs are good in the unit for hearing impairment and satisfactory in the main school. Effective use is made of loan collections.

The efficiency of the school

90 At the time of the last inspection the school was found to operate efficiently. This remains the case. Governors now have a substantial involvement in budget planning and this represents an improvement since the last inspection.

91 The school's development plan is a sound instrument for directing spending in the short and medium term. It identifies the major inputs of money and staff development time needed to implement initiatives in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The plan gives a clear indication of the timescales for developments and which members of staff are responsible for seeing them through. Funds raised by parents have made a very significant contribution to the provision of new computers for the computer suite. Funds received by the school for the education of children with special educational needs are applied appropriately.

92 However, the school development plan does not provide a long-term perspective on the school's development. It gives little sense of the governors' future aspirations for the school, in the context of demand for places, and likely funding patterns, and the long-term strategies to be adopted to realise these aspirations. In particular, it takes insufficient account of the changing characteristics of the school and exceptionally large budget surplus that has built up over recent years. The surplus is well in excess of what would be required to allow a prudent contingency to cope with the unexpected. While the governors have some general ideas about how this surplus could be used, these are not part of a thorough strategic plan. In view of these shortcomings, financial planning is unsatisfactory.

93 Teaching staff are well deployed. In religious education and music, teachers with particular

skills are able to teach classes in addition to their own. However, the last inspection noted that neither subject leaders, nor teaching assistants, were used to best effect. In both instances this remains the case. Subject leaders have too slight a role in monitoring standards of work, and teaching assistants are inefficiently managed in the main school.

94 The school's teaching equipment and materials are used effectively by the teachers and by the children. In some classrooms large stocks of old and worn books still occupy shelf space despite being used infrequently. Accommodation is used well and a room has been set aside for a library and computer suite. Time is also spent well in many lessons, most of which begin promptly, and are conducted at a brisk pace.

95 Day to day financial control and administration are very good. The finance committee, whose members have a good understanding of how the annual budget is constructed and operated, regularly reviews reconciliation statements. The latest audit of the school's financial systems indicates that they are very good. Money collected is managed efficiently and securely. Accounts are suitably backed up, and local authority advice is sought whenever necessary. Office staff operate the computerised financial and administrative systems efficiently.

1 At the time of the last inspection the school was found to provide satisfactory value for money. Taking into account:

- the attainment of the children when they enter the school;
 - the progress they make in learning;
 - their personal development;
 - the quality of teaching;
 - cost of provision, and substantial budget surplus;
- the school continues to provide satisfactory value for money.

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PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

97 The previous inspection found that overall attainment in English was in line with national standards. In the three-year period 1996 to 1998 the school's results in the national tests for children aged eleven rose steadily to well above the national average and faster than the national rate of improvement. In 1999, the most recent tests for which national comparisons are available, the school's results in English were in line with the national average for children reaching both the expected and higher than expected levels, (level 4 and level 5) in all schools and similar schools.

98 Observations of lessons during the inspection show that children's attainment is well above average for their age at the end of the key stage. Reading as well as listening and speaking are particularly good and this has a very positive effect on their work in all subjects.

99 Children listen attentively to adults and to their classmates. Their oral responses are usually confident and to the point, especially when sharing their own experiences. They contribute very well to discussions, and are often able to accommodate uncertainties or nuances of opinion. They use a wide range of vocabulary and express views clearly and sensibly.

100 Many children are enthusiastic and skilled readers with their own favourite authors and stories. They have a wide knowledge of children's literature and talk well about their likes and dislikes. However, the stock of books for older more able children is limited and their individual reading programmes are not always monitored closely enough to ensure that they draw upon a wide range of different kinds of reading. Children take books home daily, but their reading records contain few written comments from teachers to help them improve. Many children read aloud expressively and with enjoyment, including some good characterisation. When necessary they often work out new words by intelligent use of the story. Higher attaining children discuss complexities of plot and character with good references to the text. They predict possible story lines and make comparisons with their earlier reading. Most children know how to use information books effectively. They refer quickly to the contents page, index, headings and pictures with growing skill in skimming and scanning. This is an improvement from the previous inspection report.

101 Children's writing is generally good, but not as strong as reading and speaking and listening. The school is aware of this and is working hard to raise standards further. Children write for a range

of purposes, including stories, newspaper reports, letters and poems. The content of what they write is usually sensible and imaginative, but ideas are sometimes not sustained and developed sufficiently.

Higher attaining children are not always challenged enough to develop a better understanding of style and audience. Insufficient use is made of drafting to produce succinct final pieces. Children make good use of dictionaries and give appropriate attention to punctuation, spelling and handwriting. However, children do not always take sufficient care and there are too many simple errors.

102 Attainment on entry varies from year to year, from average to above average, but most children make good progress in lessons and over time. Children with special educational needs make good progress when set appropriate work; otherwise their progress is unsatisfactory. Few teachers set tasks matched to children's particular needs or targets set in children's individual education plans. The implementation of the literacy hour is contributing successfully to progress. Whole class sessions within the hour are often organised effectively and capture children's interest. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson on the life and work of Roald Dahl. Group work is sometimes less effective with rather mundane tasks which do not challenge and motivate the children sufficiently. In addition, the plenary session is sometimes omitted and opportunities are lost to share experiences, check on children's progress and move learning forward. In the unit for children with hearing impairment, children make good progress in literacy. Drama and videos are used extensively to make learning real for the children. In this way, children are taught well to write with clear meaning.

103 Children's response and attitude towards their work is frequently very good and never less than satisfactory. This is broadly in line with the previous report and makes a very positive contribution to their progress. Children show considerable enthusiasm and want to succeed. They work sensibly alongside one another to complete the work in the time available. They undertake responsibility with care. Their behaviour is very good. They remain on task, even when not supervised directly. Relationships are very good and children show pride in their achievements.

104 The quality of teaching is good and often very good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have secure subject knowledge that is shared effectively with children. Resources are organised efficiently and a calm working atmosphere created. Texts are chosen well and work builds, mostly successfully, on previous learning. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what children can do in the time available. There is a strong emphasis on consolidating and acquiring knowledge and understanding. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson in which children considered the difference between fact and opinion. Good links are made with other subjects such as history. For example, in a Year 4 lesson links were made with words 'which have a Greek root'. The text in this lesson also gave children an opportunity to consider the changing role of women in society. Teaching is less effective when tasks are undemanding and assessment of children's learning is not reflected in the work that is set, particularly for higher attainers and those with special educational needs.

• **Mathematics**

105 In the previous inspection in 1996, attainment was in line with national expectations. Since then, the trend has been towards improved results. Lesson observations show that current attainment is above average. However, the most recent test results, 1999, indicate that, when compared to all schools attainment is average. It is below average when compared to similar schools. These figures do not show that the number of children reaching the higher than expected level, level 5, is well above average when compared to all schools.

106 The school is implementing the National Numeracy Strategy and is rightly emphasising number work and mental and oral arithmetic. Children become competent in using the four mathematical operations. Those in Year 6 use calculators effectively in investigations and show a good grasp of the processes involved. They make sensible estimates against which to check their answers. The extra attention given to mental arithmetic means children recall number facts satisfactorily. Some still have difficulty as they do not have the necessary skills at their fingertips. Children can multiply decimals to two places accurately and investigate probability with understanding. They have a good knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes and symmetry.

Most are competent at measuring distances in kilometres and length in millimetres and centimetres. They collect and read data, which they record correctly in bar and pie charts, scattergrams, tree diagrams and line graphs. On occasion, some of this work is extended into information and communication technology.

107 Attainment on entry changes from year to year between average and above average. Evidence from lessons and children's past and present exercise books shows that overall progress is good in spite of these variations. It is good or better in half the lessons and satisfactory in all but one of the rest, an improvement since the last inspection. Many children become confident in using numbers and measures within mathematics and in other subjects, such as history and geography, where they explore pyramid shapes and compass bearings. They develop appropriate mathematical language and use the correct words when talking about shapes, for example hexagon, nonagon and trapezium. Children with special educational needs make good progress when they receive appropriate work and additional support. Their progress is hindered when they are withdrawn from lessons for additional work in literacy. This time cannot be caught up. Higher attainers make unsatisfactory progress when they are made to complete easy exercises first before moving on to more challenging tasks. There is some evidence that boys make slightly better progress than girls over time. Children with hearing impairment make good progress in the acquisition of mathematical knowledge and skills. The children are fascinated and excited by the practical work and their progress is enhanced by teachers' close adherence to the National Numeracy Strategy.

108 Children's responses and behaviour are good or very good in three-quarters of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. They are obedient and attentive, carry out instructions well and have positive attitudes to their work. In the very best lessons, children answer questions promptly and devise their own strategies, which they share with the class sometimes on the board. Most can be trusted to work on their own, follow instructions carefully and present their work neatly. When working together on practical tasks or investigations they exchange useful ideas that help to develop their own logical thinking. Children with special educational needs lose heart when work is too difficult for them.

109 Teaching overall is good and has improved since the last inspection. However, the quality ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, teachers are confident and have a good understanding of mathematics. Lessons begin with the focus of the day's work written on the board to which teachers refer during the lesson and when summing up. Classes are managed effectively and teachers expect children to work hard and behave well. Lessons have a good pace and time and resources are both used well. Homework is often given and marked during lessons, although this practice is inconsistent. Planning is rightly based on the new Numeracy Framework, but the work is not always matched to children's varying abilities. This means that some children do not make the progress they should. Higher attainers are not always pushed on fast enough and children with special needs are often set work that is too demanding. This is because teachers rarely use assessment procedures to check and record children's progress in a systematic way.

110 The National Numeracy Strategy has been satisfactorily implemented in all classes. Mental and oral arithmetic sessions have been introduced but some lack pace and children work too slowly. The main part of some lessons over-runs and insufficient time is given to summing up. Opportunities to assess further what children have learned and the setting of individual targets are therefore lost.

• **Science**

111 At the time of the last inspection a key issue was to review the progress children made in science. While their attainment was broadly in line with national expectations, many children did not progress as well as they could.

112 The school has responded to this issue energetically, and with considerable success. As a result standards of attainment are now above average in relation to national expectations at the end of the key stage, and children's progress is good. This is a significant improvement since the

previous inspection.

113 The 1999 national tests and assessments indicate that the number of children reaching the nationally expected and higher than expected levels is above average. Results from the three years 1996 to 1998, averaged out, show that attainment has been well above the nationally expected levels. When these results are compared with those from similar schools a different picture emerges. The percentage of children reaching the nationally expected level is average. The percentage of children reaching the higher than expected level, level 5, is above average.

114 The attainment of children on entry to the school varies considerably from year to year, from average to above average. Most children make good progress in science as they move through the school, and they also progress well during most of their lessons. The progress of children with special educational needs is good when they are well supported with appropriate work and adult assistance. Otherwise, like the progress of higher attaining children, progress is unsatisfactory because science lessons very seldom include tasks well matched to their abilities. In the unit for hearing-impaired children, drama, small group work, and experiments designed to meet their precise needs enable the children to make good progress in both scientific knowledge and skills.

115 The children's work programme covers all the required elements of the National Curriculum. In the lower school, they learn about the main parts of a plant and the conditions plants need for healthy growth. They describe and classify a range of materials in common use, by their properties, and explain how those properties affect their use. They appreciate, for example, that the impermeability of plastic makes it useful for waterproofing. In work on forces they have learned the effects of pushing and pulling on different objects such as a marble and a piece of sponge. They know that running holding a sheet of cardboard is difficult because air resistance hinders the movement. By the time they complete Year 6, this good start has been systematically extended. Most eleven-year-olds know about plant reproduction, photosynthesis and habitats. Their studies of materials have taught them about processes such as filtration, evaporation and condensation. They have learned about conductivity, and that some changes to materials can be reversed while others cannot.

116 The children also learn about the essential processes of scientific enquiry and experimentation. In the younger classes they carry out simple practical tests with teacher direction. For example, they experiment to find out how plants absorb water. They measure and record their observations carefully. By the age of eleven they carry out more complex experiments, controlling the variables to ensure a fair test. They predict experimental outcomes and observe, measure and record with accuracy, sometimes using the computer to help. Much of this work is prescriptively taught. There are too few opportunities for the children to devise and conduct simple experiments of their own.

117 Children's attitudes to their science work are good, and they invariably behave very well in lessons. They are responsive in discussions, and confident to put forward their own ideas. They work carefully and neatly, sustaining their concentration well right through the lessons. When given an opportunity to work in groups, they do so very maturely. Overall, their work programme gives them too few opportunities to show initiative, plan aspects of their own work, or take simple decisions.

118 The quality of science teaching is good. Of the ten lessons observed, none were unsatisfactory. The best lessons are planned well. The teachers are careful to ensure that new ideas

are made relevant to the children's daily lives, and that they have a chance to try out some ideas of their own. In work on friction for example, children list the objects in their homes that work by springs.

Children extend their knowledge of electrical circuits by trying to design and build a circuit in which several bulbs, in different combinations, light up. The investigative nature of this task promotes speedy learning. The teachers are confident in their own knowledge of science. This helps them to question the children in a challenging and purposeful way, and to give clear and accurate explanations. This, together with the business-like pace of lessons contributes well to the good progress children make.

119 In several otherwise satisfactory lessons teaching was too prescriptive in style. Children did not have to think hard, express their own ideas, or take decisions because the teacher told them all they needed to know. In most science lessons, no extension tasks were provided for children who learn quickly. Both these shortcomings result in children's progress being hindered.

120 The school's thorough introduction of a new, nationally recommended scheme of work for science has been very successful. It has ensured that the learning programme builds up in a well-sequenced way from week to week. In addition a new system for auditing the science curriculum is helping school management detect the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. However, the monitoring of science teaching is still unsatisfactory since the subject leader has no way of finding out how well the subject is taught in each class.

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OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

121 Three art lessons, two in Year 4 and one in Year 6, were seen during the period of the inspection. Judgements were informed by an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. The programme of work is broad and balanced and children make satisfactory progress over time and in lessons, including those with special educational needs. This is an improvement on the previous inspection report that found that there was not a whole school approach to the subject and that children did not make steady progress from year to year.

122 Children have satisfactory skills using pencils, pastels, charcoal and crayons to draw and colour. This often helps them to illustrate work across the curriculum, for example in history and science. As children progress up through the school, they show a growing confidence in the ability to represent what they see through pictures. Much of the work is designed to encourage their observation of the world about them, for example charcoal drawings of trees. They mix and apply colours with increasing skill and learn successfully about shade, pattern and texture. An example of this was seen in a Year 4 lesson in which children used a small range of colours to make simple patterns that depicted light and dark shades. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists. Children adapt their painting to work in the style of such artists. For example, Year 4 children have successfully produced repeat patterns linked to nature in the style of William Morris. Displays around the school show that children have also considered artists such as Van Gogh, Picasso and Cezanne. Such studies help broaden their understanding of different cultures. Some particularly good work has been produced in the style of Lowry.

123 Children's response and attitude towards art is good and sometimes very good. They enjoy the tasks, work carefully and show pride in outcomes. They share ideas with one another and use resources sensibly. Their behaviour is good and they are pleased to talk to visitors about their efforts. Many children are beginning to evaluate their work effectively and to refine and improve it. Some become fully absorbed in their work.

124 Teaching was satisfactory and good in Year 4. It was very good in Year 6. Work is planned well and appropriately matched to children's interests. Teachers are enthusiastic and this helps motivate children. Explanations and directions are clear and questions are used effectively to help children know how to improve. Opportunities are provided for them to experiment within their work and to think for themselves. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In the Year 6 lesson, the teachers' subject knowledge was very good and there was a very effective demonstration of the use of light and dark tones in sketching. A strong emphasis was rightly placed on the building of skills and the need to refine and improve pictures. This had a positive impact on children's knowledge and understanding of sketching.

125 Art displays in classrooms and shared areas are attractive and mounted with care. They enrich the visual environment and include good examples of children's drawing, painting, printing and collage work.

Design and technology

126 The school has increased time for literacy and numeracy and that limits the time available for a broad programme in design and technology. Evidence was gained from work on display, children's previous work and discussions with children. Three lessons, two in Year 3 and one in Year 4 were observed during the inspection.

127 A key issue in the previous inspection was to ensure the school met the requirement to make provision for food technology. This has been done satisfactorily. The implementation of national guidelines for teaching design and technology is assisting good planning for increasingly demanding work each year. The introduction of a coherent assessment system to evaluate children's attainment and progress has overcome a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection. However, this new system is too new to show its impact on curriculum planning.

128 Children make satisfactory progress in developing their designing and making skills over time. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Progress was faster in lessons observed, as teachers are now following national guidelines for the subject. Children communicate their ideas by drawing carefully and cutting shapes accurately and joining materials appropriately. Children evaluate their work during both the designing and making processes. For example, children in Year 4 evaluated a number of commercial money boxes, wallets, purses and other coin holders before designing their own. They made a paper pattern and cut it out to make sure the size of their coin holder was appropriate. At the time of the inspection children were making the coin holders and evaluating the effectiveness of their sewing. Prior work showed that children in Year 6 designed and made prototypes of slippers from card before making the finished good quality items. They used a wide range of materials and a variety of methods to join them together.

129 In Year 3, children design and make models of monsters and dragons using pneumatics to good effect. In the unit for hearing-impaired children, puppets were made successfully by joining pieces of card so that the puppet arms and legs could move. Throughout the school, skills in mathematics are rarely used to enhance work in design and technology. In food technology, children look closely at recipes for biscuits and sandwiches. They devise their own recipes, evaluate the taste and give good attention to food hygiene.

130 In the lessons seen, the children's attitudes were very good. Children take responsibility for

selecting a range of resources from those made available by the teacher. In Year 4 particularly, the children became totally absorbed in their work, which enabled them to work to a high standard. In the other lessons, children enjoyed the challenges set by the teachers, worked very well together in small groups, sharing their ideas. Behaviour is excellent and children take responsibility for tidying the classroom in readiness for the next lesson.

131 The quality of teaching is good in lessons observed. Tasks are imaginative, well planned and capture children's interests. They are related to children's daily life which helps to motivate them to do well. Lessons build well on the skills children have acquired previously. Teachers make the most of opportunities to talk to individual children to enhance their skills, especially in sewing and pneumatics. Attractive, well-chosen resources help children to make items of good quality. Teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve and enable them to make choices about the materials they need and the outcomes of their work. Children are managed very well. This provides a positive working atmosphere in which children can think hard, work hard and do their best. The weakness in teaching is that teachers give children few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to the subject.

Geography

132 Progress in geography is good and this is an improvement since the previous inspection when progress was satisfactory. Four lessons were seen. Two in Year 3 and two in Year 6 and these lessons and other evidence shows that children's geographical skills, knowledge, and understanding are good.

133 In Year 3, children study the local areas and identify physical features on aerial photographs and maps. In one class, children linked features they recognised, for example parks and the railway station, to their own designs for a community. They worked out the best places to put these features, as well as a hospital, school, shops and police station in their community.

134 In Year 6, children's skills are developing well particularly in interpreting maps, using scales and references and in describing where places are in relation to each other. Progress is most evident when children are challenged to use their geographical skills as when finding specific, small locations on a large map. As a part of a study of Essex, children use grid references well to locate features which are known to them. They make good use of map keys and symbols and have an understanding of differences in scale. They have a good knowledge of how they can use geographical skills in every day life, for example, working out distances for a trip between the school and Danbury or Norwich using maps with different scales.

135 Children's attitudes and behaviour in geography lessons are good. They enjoy using maps and studying areas they know. They show great interest in finding places. They work together well to solve problems and are willing to discuss their ideas.

136 The quality of teaching in geography lessons is good which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. Good examples were observed of teachers using cross-curricular references, for example in work on map references and co-ordinates in mathematics. Teachers place good emphasis on geographical skills whilst not ignoring the need for good general knowledge in geography. Teachers give children very clear explanations and introductions to new knowledge making it easy for the children to understand. Work is usually appropriate, although the use of worksheets in children's books is somewhat excessive. The quality and nature of the tasks on worksheets are sometimes insufficiently challenging.

History

137 Progress in history is good. Children are developing research skills and a sense of chronology. They show good knowledge of historical facts and are beginning to develop research skills that enable them to find information for themselves. This is an improvement since the last inspection when progress was satisfactory.

138 Children in Years 3 and 4 know the main characteristics about Greek civilisations. Children are developing historical research skills effectively. For example, in one Year 4 class, children used different sources of evidence, such as photographs of Greek places, books and pictures from Greek vases to investigate how the Greeks lived. Using the pictures of figures on pottery the children made thoughtful assumptions about how the Greeks dressed. Another Year 4 class is exploring the importance of the theatre in Greek life. The children are taking on the roles of scriptwriters, mask and costume makers to gain greater insight into this part of Greek life.

139 In Year 5, children acquire good knowledge about how different peoples invaded and settled in Britain. In a study of the Celts revolt against the Romans they are finding out about different beliefs, cultures and military strategies. In doing so they make informed guesses as to why, for example Boadicea and the Romans behaved as they did. In Year 6, children are studying life in Victorian times. One group of children in the unit for hearing-impaired children studied life in a Victorian school. This involved dressing up as a Victorian child and experiencing life in a Victorian classroom including writing on slates. The children describe their feelings about what life would have been like at school in Victorian times vividly.

140 Children's attitudes and behaviour in history lessons are very good. They show great interest in some aspects, for example the fact that invaders have had an impact on areas close to where they live. Children work with good levels and concentration and talk willingly about the subject and what they have learned or seen on visits to Ringsfield Hall.

141 The quality of teaching in history lessons is good which is also an improvement since the previous report. Lessons are well planned and build well on what children have learned before. Some teachers are skilled at telling stories and capturing children's interest. For example, when telling the children about comedy and tragedy in Greek theatre, the teacher took on the role of a comic or tragic heroine to illustrate the meaning of the words clearly to the children. Often teachers show children real things from the period of history they are studying to make the subject meaningful to them. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly good and very good in Year 4, and the methods they use are usually effective. However, the excessive use of work sheets, not always of good quality, detracts from some of the good work which children undertake. In addition, a lack of a range of tasks for children of differing abilities holds back progress.

Information and communication technology

142 At the end of the key stage, children's attainment meets national expectations, which is similar to their attainment at the time of the last inspection. It is still the case that children have sound skills in basic word processing skills and that Year 6 children have insufficient challenge to experience high level skills in, for example, desk top publishing. In Year 3, children learn about computer control, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

143 Information and communication technology is an improving subject due to the effective use of 15 recently installed computers and the implementation of national guidelines for teaching the subject. Both girls and boys use computers with growing levels of confidence and skill within information and communication technology and to enhance their learning in other subjects. They apply information and communication technology particularly well to reading, writing and art. It is not yet used to support work across other areas of the curriculum frequently, especially mathematics.

144 Children at the end of the key stage have sound skills in operating computer equipment. For example, they switch on the computer and open and close programmes they require. They know how to save and retrieve their work. Most show satisfactory keyboard skills and good control of the mouse to operate programmes. They communicate their ideas satisfactorily when combining text with pictures. A small group of children in Year 5 have begun to use the Internet successfully to send messages and find information about Islamic carpets. Children with special educational needs make good progress in the acquisition of computer skills as they are well supported. Their progress is slower when the sound on talking programmes, to help them read words on the screen, is turned low so that it does not disturb other children. There are no headphones to overcome this problem.

145 Progress in lessons observed was mostly good. Since the recent installation of the computer suite, progress has been faster. This is because whole class lessons mean children are taught specific skills which they can apply quickly and practise for up to an hour at a time. Prior to the installation of the computer suite, progress was slower as the resources were limited and children had less time to work on a computer.

146 Over time, progress is variable and depends on the expertise of the teacher. Progress is very good in Year 3, where the teacher has very good information and communication skills and shares them very effectively with the children. Children in Year 3, gain skills in using important software commands to open the programmes they require and in how to save and print their work. In turn, they quickly learn to use the tools in an art programme to create imaginative pictures of dinosaurs, homes, the seaside and shapes. In Year 4, children quickly build on their word processing skills to edit their work and use a spell checker to ensure accuracy in spelling. In Year 5, children combine artistic and mathematical skills to create symmetrical pictures based on Islamic carpet designs. Progress in Year 6 is satisfactory. Children in this age group are learning to use a new system and teachers are less confident in this aspect of the curriculum. Year 6 children highlight their work and select different fonts and styles for the best effect. They import pictures and combine them with text. They use graphics well, especially when they design and make patterns for wrapping paper.

147 Children's attitudes are very good. They are enthusiastic about computers and want to succeed. Most concentrate well and enjoy making decisions about their work. Children are confident. They like to explore the different software tools to see the impact of their instructions on their work on screen. Children work well in pairs and behave very well. They show respect for the teacher, each other and handle the resources sensibly.

148 The quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory in Year 6, very good in Year 3 and good in the rest. This good standard of teaching stems from very good support from the information and communication technology co-ordinator who provides very good advice and lesson plans to support colleagues. Teachers are determined to use the new resources effectively and efficiently. The school has identified the need to raise all teachers' expertise in the subject so that teaching is very good across the school. They lack a breadth and depth of knowledge to teach the subject well and take action when things go wrong. Meanwhile, lessons are planned well with a clear focus that teachers are confident about teaching.

149 Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations to help children to make good progress in basic computer skills. Lessons have good pace and structure so that children take on new learning and apply it correctly. Teachers use appropriate subject vocabulary and encourage children to use their initiative. They give good feedback to the children to ensure that they make best use of the available software. Class management is very good and they encourage the children to be independent, confident and to learn from their mistakes. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to teaching the subject.

• **Music**

150 There has been considerable improvement in music since the last inspection. Children now make good progress in all aspects of the subject and this is reflected in their responses. When singing, children use their voices well to moderate pitch and tempo and keep in tune. They are sensitive to the moods of the music and know when to sing loudly and quietly. Traditional songs and hymns are sung well from memory in lessons and assemblies. Children sing 'rounds' in two-part unison confidently, sometimes unaccompanied. Listening and appraising skills are developed well through the use of well-known classical and popular music in assemblies and class work. Children have clear views about the music they enjoy and justify their reasons well. They understand the different ways in which instruments, such as drums, can be played to a steady beat to create a particular atmosphere, such as anticipation.

151 Many children can read music and name notes of different values such as minims, crotchets and quavers. They use these effectively in making up and playing their own rhythms and tunes, for example, using names of towns in the United Kingdom and America. Younger children understand the difference in sound made by wooden and metal instruments. They choose the appropriate ones for activities such as marching to match the words of a poem. Children regularly practise on the instruments, including those from other cultures, to improve their skills and techniques.

152 Response to music is very good. This is because children are fully involved, readily answer questions and take an active part in singing and music making. Lessons have appeal and most children are interested and motivated in what they do and are disappointed when the work has to end. Relationships between children are very good and they work well together when composing tunes. They volunteer eagerly to take a solo part or to conduct a large singing group.

153 Teaching is good and sometimes very good. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Teachers with very good knowledge in music, including the co-ordinator, teach a number of different classes. A good scheme of work assists teachers who are less experienced in the subject to teach music well. Lessons have a good pace and include a wide variety of different activities to maintain and challenge children's interest. Lesson plans are based on the scheme of work to ensure that skills and knowledge are built on from year to year. Teachers use an effective range of strategies in managing their children, including giving them a choice of instruments and opportunities to be creative when composing and performing tunes. The music co-ordinator sets a very good example to staff and her influence is a major factor in the good quality of teaching.

154 Choir and recorder clubs are popular and well attended. Children take part in school concerts and music festivals with other schools. Instrumental tuition in violin and woodwind is offered by arrangement. Children gained beneficial experience of African music with the ethnic 'Bassistry Arts Company' when it visited the school recently.

Physical education

155 Gymnastics and games lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. Records show that dance, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities are also included in the school's programme. However, no swimming lessons were held during last year and, as a result, the school did not comply with statutory requirements to enable all children to swim 25 metres by the end of the key stage. The school plans to hold swimming lessons for Year 6 children in the summer term of the current year.

156 In lessons, children make mostly satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the previous inspection report. Children sustain energetic activity and work together well. They show awareness of space and a willingness to repeat and practise in order to improve skills. They handle equipment sensibly and are mindful of safety factors. Tasks build well on previous learning and children's movements show increasing control and co-ordination. An example of this was seen in a Year 4 lesson in which children worked in pairs to develop floor movements, including rolls, handstands and cartwheels. They evaluated and refined their efforts. Higher attainers showed an increasing ability to begin and complete movements with

poise. In games, children understand the importance of rules and of fair play. They show satisfactory co-ordination of hand and eye. They demonstrate growing skill in moving into correct positions to receive and pass the ball. Examples of this were seen in a Year 6 football lesson in which children also practised tackling and dribbling skills successfully.

157 Children's attitudes to learning physical education are good and this has a positive impact on their progress. Most are well motivated and consistently do their best. They work hard, sometimes out of breath through effort. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy the activities. Many are beginning to evaluate successfully their own performance as well as that of others. This is an improvement on the previous report. All children wear appropriate clothing for lessons.

158 The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, lessons are generally structured well and tasks are matched appropriately to children's abilities. This is an improvement on the previous report that found a lack of challenge in some activities. Relationships are good and praise and encouragement are used effectively to help move learning forward. In the best lessons, the emphasis is on the systematic development of skills. Constructive on-going feedback is given to help children improve. Time is used well, activities have a sense of purpose and teachers have high expectations of what children can do.

159 The school competes in some local sports matches and older children have the opportunity to take part in a small number of extra-curricular activities, including football, netball and country dancing. These are supported well and help to widen children's experiences of physical and sporting activities.

Religious education

160 Children's attainment in religious education at the end of the key stage is below average in relation to the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. At the time of the last inspection children were found to be attaining standards in the subject in line with expectations. This therefore represents a decline in standards.

161 Since the last inspection equipment and books have been bought to assist the teaching of religious education. This has helped to broaden the range of teaching styles used, going some way to meeting one of the inspection criticisms made at that time. Two experienced and enthusiastic teachers, with very good religious education knowledge, teach the subject to classes additional to their own, and this too has helped improve the programme the children receive.

162 Most children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in their lessons. Their progress is accelerated when they have an opportunity to discuss issues in groups, and to think for themselves. Very little children's work was available to be scrutinised during the inspection and there was none at all from two of the year groups. There were no records of children's achievements in the subject. Consequently, progress is unsatisfactory as children move through the school. Evidence from previous weekly plans indicates that the religious education programme planned meets the statutory requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

163 By the time they are eleven most children have a sound understanding of the origins and practice of Christianity. They know the central events of Christ's life, ministry and teaching. They know some of the main principles of Christianity, and some of the reasons Christians have for going

to church. They have also learned a little about Judaism and Hinduism in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In these areas their knowledge is superficial. They recall some simple facts about each faith but have little notion of the religious beliefs and practices of followers. The teaching programme also gives attention to implicit religious education, although children's knowledge and understanding is also rudimentary in this area. They know something of the interdependence of humans with their environment. They appreciate the uniqueness of each person and the feelings and needs people have in common. They know that people live in communities, including faith communities, held together by common values.

164 Children enjoy their religious education lessons. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are keen contributors to discussion and happy to share their own experiences with others. When given a chance to work in small groups they do so with great responsibility. Children invariably discuss matters of religious belief and practice respectfully.

165 The quality of religious education teaching is satisfactory. Of the four lessons seen, two were good, and the rest were satisfactory. The main strength of the lessons was the imaginative and motivating teaching approach adopted. In a Year 3 lesson on the uses that Christians make of a church, the teacher brought her own wedding dress and photographs to show the children. The children were spellbound and keen to contribute their own experiences of going to weddings. The interest of the children was so intense, that the teacher introduced complex ideas about why some people want a church wedding while others do not. A weakness in otherwise satisfactory lessons is the tendency of teachers to over-direct the work. Children have little opportunity to discuss the ideas presented and to share their experiences with others. Opportunities are not taken for them to research issues for themselves, or to reach collaborative decisions in small groups. When this happens their progress in learning is not as brisk as it could be.

166 The school's religious education programme is undergoing change at present. The school is in the process of adopting a new scheme of work prepared by the local authority in support of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Meanwhile, the school's existing scheme of work lacks the detail necessary to ensure that children progress at a good pace as they move through the school, and that good standards are achieved. There are weaknesses in the school's management of religious education. Despite the need to assimilate the new scheme of work, the subject does not feature in the school's development plan. Nor is there any systematic arrangement for monitoring the quality of provision in religious education.

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PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

167 Six inspectors carried out the inspection over four days, totalling 21 inspector days.

168 88 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. All teachers employed by the school on a full-time basis and three on a part-time basis were observed. All subjects of the National Curriculum were seen. Additional time was spent talking to children about their attainment in religious education, and their views of the school.

169 8% of children were heard reading. Time was spent scrutinising children's previous work. The school identified at least three children in each year group, representing a range of abilities including those with special educational needs. Children talked about the books they have read, authors they like and their skills in finding and using reference books. Reading records and results from standardised tests were scrutinised.

170 Most assemblies were attended and a sample of registration sessions observed. Children were observed during breaks from lessons, in the dining hall, and arriving at school and leaving at the end of the day. Special needs groups were observed working with the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants.

171 Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, including the chairman of governors, parent governors and governors responsible for children with special educational needs, numeracy and finance. Other discussions were held with the headteacher, senior staff, curriculum co-ordinators, teaching assistants, mid-day supervisors, the site manager and administrative staff.

172 A full range of detailed documentation that supports the school's work was analysed before the inspection. In addition, teachers' long term, medium term and daily lesson plans were scrutinised. Teachers provided supplementary evidence including photographic evidence, samples of assessment records and individual reports to parents. Individual education plans for children were inspected. Arrangements for children with special educational needs were discussed and observed. Attendance registers and health and safety records were scrutinised. The accommodation and resources were evaluated. Displays were inspected for evidence of attainment and attitudes to work.

173 Meetings were held with the staff and governors before the inspection to discuss the process and gather pre-inspection evidence. A meeting was held with 10 parents of children registered at the school and 122 responses to the parents' questionnaire were analysed.

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DATA AND INDICATORS

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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
Y3 - Y6	300	24	61	13

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Teachers and classes

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Qualified teachers (Y3 - Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	15.80
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	18.99

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Education support staff (Y3 - Y6)

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	223.0

Average class size: 27

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Financial data

Financial year:	1998
	£
Total Income	670,733
Total Expenditure	645,875
Expenditure per pupil	2,174.66
Balance brought forward from previous year	71,114
Balance carried forward to next year	95,972

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PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	300
Number of questionnaires returned:	122

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	12	56	15	15	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	29	57	6	7	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	12	46	32	9	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	9	36	27	25	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	14	34	19	24	9
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	19	61	16	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	6	59	19	16	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	12	60	14	13	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	60	11	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	30	57	8	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) their school	36	55	7	3	0

Numbers have been rounded up (e.g. 9.5 becomes 10 or 0.8 becomes 1 or down to the nearest number e.g. 32.3 becomes 32). They may not add up to 100 as some parents prefer not to comment on all questions.

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• **Other issues raised by parents**

Children with special educational needs find it hard to keep up, especially in Year 6 as the work does not meet their needs.

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