

INSPECTION REPORT

Barons Court Infant School and Nursery

Westcliff on Sea

Essex

LEA area: Southend

Unique reference number: 114787

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Menday

Reporting inspector: Mrs D Wilkinson
23048

Dates of inspection: 21st to 23rd May 2001

Inspection number: 193032

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 7 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Avenue Road
Westcliff on Sea
Essex

Postcode: SS0 7PJ

Telephone number: 01702 331356

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Catherine Bowstead

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23048	Mrs D Wilkinson	Registered inspector	Science Religious education Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs Equality of Opportunity	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well pupils are taught?
19653	Mrs E Dickson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3678	Mrs J Harris	Team inspector	English Geography History Foundation Stage	How well is the school led and managed?
8402	Dr V Johnston	Team inspector		English as an additional language
27654	Mrs R Scahill	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Physical Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

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The Complaints Manager, Inspection Quality Division, The Office for Standards in Education, Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

There are 106 full time pupils (55 boys and 51 girls) from Reception to Year 2, and 50 part time children (24 boys and 26 girls) in the Nursery. The school is smaller than average and some pupils are in classes of more than one year group. Since the last inspection there has been an increasingly high number of pupils joining or leaving other than at the normal time of admission or transfer. The number of pupils (21.8 per cent) for whom English is an additional language (EAL) has also increased, to well above the national average. Over half are at an early stage of learning English. Currently only 7.7 per cent of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), none with a statement of need, which is well below average. Around 10 per cent of pupils are on the able needs register. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (30.1 per cent) is above average. The school serves an area of social disadvantage, with the majority of pupils coming from homes in the below average socio-economic band. The school is within an active Educational Action Zone (EAZ) that provides effective funding to improve standards. Most children entering the nursery have standards below the average for their age. Around a third of nursery children move on to other schools, and a third entering reception having not had the same level of pre-school education, so the overall standards of children entering the reception classes is below average and is lower than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has Beacon Status and the Investors in People award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Barons Court is a very effective school that has very many strengths in all areas of its work and very few weaknesses. Its commitment to meet the needs of all its pupils means that it is successfully seeking ways to adapt and improve its work. The leadership and management are better than in most schools and have resulted in good provision, particularly in the good quality of teaching, and improving standards, which are now average. Pupils achieve very high standards in their personal development, which supports their learning very well. Resources are used very well, and the many grants and sponsorships obtained benefit pupils and help them to make good progress throughout the school. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very high level of care the school gives to all its pupils, particularly in regard to their welfare and the assessment of their progress.
- The very good leadership and management of the senior management team and governing body.
- The good quality of teaching, which has a significant impact on pupils' learning, and is especially effective in the nursery.
- The good quality and range of learning opportunities, especially the outstanding curriculum for information and communication technology and for children in the nursery, and the very good provision for SEN pupils.
- The very good provision for, and exceptional monitoring of pupils' personal development, resulting in the very good attitudes and relationships seen, which help most pupils to learn well.
- The school's very good partnership with parents which supports pupils' learning very well.

What could be improved

- The rate of attendance and high levels of unauthorised absence, which are still unsatisfactory, in spite of the school's continued good efforts to improve them.

The area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good improvement, and all the issues identified have been fully addressed. Reports now give parents a good picture of their children's progress and set useful targets for improvement. The curriculum has improved and is now good, with all policies and schemes of work being in place and regularly reviewed. The good behaviour, consistently seen in all classes, is the result of the school's hard work to adapt and meet the needs of the changing profile of pupils. All statutory items are now included in the prospectus. Despite changes in the prior attainment of pupils and the high turnover, the school is responding well to their needs. Pupils now make good progress and achieve well. Standards are rising, recently at a better rate, as the school's changing strategies begin to have an effect, and are now better than when the school was last inspected. The quality of teaching has improved and assessment procedures are now very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	most schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	C	A	D	C
Writing	B	A	C	A
Mathematics	D	E	E	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The below average results in reading and mathematics were because there were few more able pupils, so not enough reached the higher levels. Results were better in writing because of the school's emphasis on this aspect. These results were affected by the fact that nearly 50 per cent of the pupils who sat the tests had joined the school since the reception classes. A significant proportion of these were EAL pupils and, at the time of the tests, three had only been in the school for a few weeks. In the science teacher assessments, an average number of pupils reached the expected levels, but fewer the higher levels. The increasingly significant changes in the prior attainment of pupils, and also the higher number of pupils joining or leaving throughout the school, makes it very difficult to make comparisons from year to year. Standards are particularly affected by pupils' fluency in English. Boys perform better than girls, different from the national picture, mainly because girls have been less confident than boys. Standards have been improving at a rate close to that seen nationally in mathematics and writing, but not so well in reading, because of the higher number of EAL pupils now, which has depressed the proportions reaching the average and higher levels.

Standards are improving. In the work seen, by the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils now reach average standards in English, mathematics and science, and a greater number reach the higher levels. This is partly because more than half of these pupils joined in the nursery and also because the school's hard work in adapting its provision to meet the changing needs of pupils is having a positive impact. Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. The majority have sound literacy and numeracy skills and use these effectively in a range of subjects. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in information and communication technology and they make good progress to achieve well in design and technology. In both these subjects, pupils reach above average standards. In religious education, pupils achieve appropriately and reach the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus. In other subjects, pupils make at least satisfactory progress, achieve appropriately and reach the standards expected. Because of good planning and high expectations, they make good progress and achieve well in music and physical education. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make especially good progress in the nursery. However, poor prior skills mean they do not reach the standards expected by the time they enter Key Stage 1, particularly in their personal and social development and their communication and language skills. The SEN and EAL pupils make good progress and achieve well. Although few EAL pupils reach average standards in English, some reach average standards in mathematics. The more able and talented pupils are effectively challenged. They achieve well and most reach above average standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy their learning and this helps them to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils work and play well together and no aggressive behaviour was seen. Some pupils find it difficult to sit still and concentrate.
Personal development and relationships	Very good because of the very good quality relationships fostered by the school.

Attendance	Unsatisfactory, despite the school's good efforts. A few parents, some recently arrived in this country, do not view regular attendance as a high priority.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
37 Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching in the school is consistently good (89 per cent) with a high proportion (46 per cent) being very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching of SEN and able and talented pupils is very good. EAL pupils are taught well, but on a few occasions, teachers use language which is too difficult for them to understand. Teaching in the Foundation Stage, is very good (58 per cent), with very little less than good. The strengths are in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, the use of resources, the support of classroom assistants and the assessment of progress. The use of homework to support work is outstanding. The best teaching was seen in the nursery where it was very good in 80 per cent of lessons. The strengths are in the quality of activities, high expectations of all adults and the excellent relationships. Teaching is good in the reception classes (86 per cent), with a high number of lessons (43 per cent) being very good. The occasional weaknesses include insufficient purpose or structure to some activities, a lack of pace, and insufficient planning for the reception children in the mixed age classes. At Key Stage 1, 88 per cent of the teaching is at least good, and a high proportion (40 per cent) is very good or better. Two excellent lessons were seen. A significant strength is the very good relationships teachers have with pupils, encouraging them to respond positively and make good progress. Pupils' work is marked and assessed very well, helping teachers to plan effectively to build on and extend pupils' skills. Their use of resources and deployment of classroom assistants are very good. Homework gives very good support to learning. Good progress is made because pupils develop a very good knowledge of what they are learning. On a few occasions the behaviour of some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties slows the learning for other pupils in the class.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Activities are relevant and interesting. Pupils' differing abilities and needs are planned for well. The curriculum for the nursery is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. A measure of the school's success is that children often move off the SEN register. Able and talented pupils are also well provided for.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Effective teaching and an awareness of their need ensures they have access to the full curriculum and make the same good progress in their learning as other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, especially for spiritual, moral and social development. That for cultural development is good. This area gives significant support to pupils' positive attitudes to school and the confidence they develop, giving rise to the good progress they make.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school gives exceptional thought to the welfare of its pupils. Very nearly all the procedures, including those for assessment, are at least very good and those for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are outstanding.

The school's aims of 'Caring, sharing and achieving' are implicit in most aspects of school life. This underpins its determination to provide the best care that it is able for most its pupils, whatever their needs. The exceptionally strong partnership with parents supports pupils' learning very well. The provision for extra-curricular activities and links with the community and with other educational institutions are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good, through the very good partnership between the headteacher and her deputy. The headteacher's vision for the school is exceptional. Subject coordinators receive good support and carry out their roles well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Their committee structure and procedures for gathering information means they make very effective and well-informed decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good because of the high quality procedures for gathering and analysing information. This has enabled the school to adapt its provision to meet the changing needs of pupils well.
The strategic use of resources	Very good financial planning and monitoring ensures that pupils' learning is very effectively supported.

The leadership and management of special educational needs are outstanding. The number of teachers is satisfactory. The very good support they receive, although many are relatively new to the profession, means that most staff promote the work of the school well. The number and expertise of classroom assistants is very good and they support learning very well. The good accommodation is very well cared for. The quality and range of learning resources is very good. The principles of best value are applied very well and the school is extremely successful in obtaining grants or sponsorship to benefit pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Nine parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and 18 per cent of all parents returned the questionnaire.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school, are very happy and make good progress. • Behaviour is good and there is no bullying. • Teaching is good • The school is well led and managed, particularly by the headteacher. • Personal and social development is very good. • All staff are very approachable and the school responds well to their concerns. • They receive very good information about the school's work and progress their children make. • The school is very welcoming and values their help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less homework to be set. • Parents of younger children at the meeting said they would like more information about what is expected for the homework.

Inspectors fully support parents' positive views. The amount of homework is not excessive. The quality is very good and supports pupils' progress very well. Information given to parents about homework is good, but some pupils forget what they have to do and need more written information to pass on to their parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Over the past few years the attainment of pupils entering the school has changed considerably. There have been an increasing number of children living in temporary accommodation, including refugees and asylum seekers. Many of these children also have special educational needs or speak English as an additional language (EAL), with a high proportion being in the early stages of learning English. In addition, the number of pupils entering or leaving the school at times other than the normal entry and exit points has also increased and is now exceptionally high. For example, last year 46 per cent of pupils who sat the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 had entered the school since the reception classes, and a small, but significant proportion of these were EAL pupils who had only been in the school for a very short time. The school's monitoring shows that the majority of pupils who enter during Key Stage 1 have lower attainment than those pupils already in the school. Most these factors have made it very difficult for the school to maintain the standards it has achieved in the past. Nevertheless, it has made good improvements in its provision, adapting it well to meet the needs of most its pupils effectively, including the introduction of two part-time nursery classes. In both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, most pupils, including those the special educational needs (SEN), and EAL and able and talented pupils, make good progress in their learning and achieve well. By the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils now reach at least average standards overall.
2. The attainment of children entering the nursery shows a wide variation, but overall it is below average, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy skills. Because of the exceptionally good provision, nursery children make very good gains in their learning and, by the time they leave the nursery class, most children, including those with SEN and EAL, achieve well. However, the overall attainment of children entering the reception classes is still below average. This is mainly because around a third of the children who attended the nursery move on to other schools for their reception year. In addition, about a third of children entering the reception classes did not attend the school's nursery and have little experience of pre-school education. In the reception classes, children make at least satisfactory and mostly good progress to achieve well, but the majority do not reach the standards expected nationally by the time they enter Key Stage 1, especially in their personal and social and language skills.
3. Children in the Foundation Stage adapt easily to the school's routines, co-operate well and begin to take turns, but some children in the reception class find concentration difficult. Children enjoy books and discuss the story and characters, mainly by using the pictures. They act out imaginative stories in role-play and communicate effectively when talking or answering questions. Most children write their own name correctly. Children can sort shapes and compare weights accurately. They recognise and can count numbers to ten. Children are gaining knowledge of the world around them, for example how some living things grow and what the toys their parents and grandparents played with were like. Because of the high quality provision, their knowledge and use of computers is above that expected for their age. Children develop sound physical skills in control and movement, through using a range of large and small apparatus and equipment. They make good progress in their creative development in painting, printing and model making.
4. In 2000, in the National Curriculum tests, at the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 or higher, was above the national average in

reading, close to the average in writing, but well below average in mathematics. The proportion achieving the higher Level 3 was similar to the average in writing, but well below the average in reading and mathematics. Overall, taking account of the full range of attainment, results were average in writing, but below the average in reading and mathematics. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, results were well above the average in writing and similar to the average in reading. However, the low results in mathematics meant they were still well below average. Results were better in writing because of the very good emphasis which has been placed on this aspect. Results were lower in mathematics mainly because the numeracy strategy has had less time to have an impact on standards. Teacher assessments in science indicated that, last year, nearly 90 per cent of pupils achieved the expected Level 2, similar to the national average, but only 8 per cent of pupils were recorded as attaining the higher Level 3, which was below the average.

5. Because of the increasingly significant changes in the prior attainment of pupils, especially in their fluency in English, and also the higher number of pupils joining or leaving throughout the school, it is very difficult to make comparisons from year to year. However, in writing and mathematics, standards have been improving at a rate close to that seen nationally. Standards had not improved so well in reading, largely because of the greater number of EAL pupils now, which has depressed the proportion reaching the higher levels. The performance of boys has been better than that of girls, which is different from the national picture, mainly because girls have been less confident than boys in past years. However, since the school has been able to offer nursery education, this situation has changed and a number of the more able and talented pupils are girls.
6. Inspection evidence indicates that, this year, standards in the work seen in reading, writing, mathematics and science are better. The majority of pupils now reach average standards and a greater number of pupils reach the higher levels. This is partly because a higher number of these pupils have had experience of the school's very good nursery provision, but also because of the school's hard work in adapting its provision to meet the needs of pupils. Most pupils currently in Year 2 achieve well. The majority of pupils have average literacy and numeracy skills and they use these effectively in a number of subjects, for example science and design and technology.
7. In English, pupils make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils reach average standards. Most pupils have average listening skills, but speaking skills vary greatly. Some pupils are articulate, confident speakers while others have a limited vocabulary. The standards they reach are affected by their prior attainment in this aspect, including whether they speak English as an additional language. Standards of speaking and listening are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Pupils enjoy books and make good progress in learning to read, although a number are hesitant when building new words by using the sound patterns. However, the majority reach average standards. In writing, pupils make good progress to achieve well. Their handwriting, use of punctuation, spelling and vocabulary is at the level expected. Pupils write effective stories, descriptions and instructions. They use their literacy skills well in some subjects, for example science and design and technology. By the end of Year 2, the majority reach average standards.
8. Most pupils make good progress to achieve well in mathematics. The majority reach average standards. Pupils have a secure understanding of number including place value and patterns, such as in tables. They apply their skills confidently in different computations and explain their answers. Pupils recognise 2 and 3-dimensional shapes, collect data and process it accurately, including in graphs drawn on the computer. They make good use of their numeracy skills in other subjects such as ICT and design and technology.

9. Most pupils make very good progress in acquiring scientific enquiry and investigation skills. In this area they achieve very well and reach above average standards. This investigative approach also means pupils make good progress in gaining scientific knowledge and understanding over a range of topics such as the life cycles of plants and insects, and forces and electricity. The majority of pupils reach at least average standards in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Most pupils achieve well and this helps the more able and talented pupils to reach standards that are above the national average.
10. The provision in information and communication technology is of an exceptionally high quality and most pupils achieve very well. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils reach standards above the national average, using computers with competence and confidence for a wide range of applications. For example, they word process effectively to support their learning in subjects such as English, they accurately collect and process data, and competently use a CD ROM or the Internet to access information.
11. In religious education, the majority of pupils reach the standards set out in the locally agreed syllabus. They achieve a sound understanding of Christianity and other world faiths, for example Judaism. They begin to understand how religion plays an important part in the lives of many people and to compare some religious beliefs with their own experiences.
12. In other subjects most pupils make at least satisfactory progress to achieve appropriately. Achievement and progress are good in design and technology, music and physical education. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils reach the standards expected in these subjects, except in design and technology, where they exceed expectations. This is because of the particularly well-planned curriculum and challenging work set by teachers.
13. Pupils with SEN are supported very well, particularly when working with the special educational needs co-ordinator, or in a group with the class teacher or a learning support assistant. As a result, they make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs) and achieve well. The school's success means that often pupils can be removed from the register and this results in the number of SEN pupils being low. The school also has a register for more able pupils and has identified a small number of pupils as being gifted and talented. Very good provision is made for their needs and pupils are set challenging work. They achieve well, often reaching standards well above the national average.
14. The achievement of most EAL pupils is similar to that of other pupils. Those who come to the school speaking little or no English generally achieve well because of the care and help they receive. Some of these pupils are now doing well enough to attain average levels in the national assessments at the end of Year 2, usually in mathematics. However, because of their lack of fluency in English, only a minority reach the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This contributes to the school's overall results in the national tests being around average, in spite of a significant number of higher achievers in English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Throughout the school, pupils have very good attitudes and this has a positive effect on their learning. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their children like coming to school, and the pupils are clearly happy and keen to be there. In almost all the lessons observed, most pupils settled quickly and showed a keen interest in their work. However, there is a small minority of pupils who find it difficult to sit still and concentrate for very long.

16. Teachers encourage pupils to be fully involved in their work and most respond positively, applying themselves purposefully to the tasks given. There was real enthusiasm in many lessons. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, pupils showed great interest in the world around them and were keen to find out more about plants and other living things. Occasionally in lessons, some pupils find it difficult to concentrate for long periods, and do not want to persevere when they find the work too difficult. In most cases these pupils are helped to concentrate by the tactful and sensitive guidance from support staff. When Year 2 pupils were using computers to find out about animals and their habitats, although they were most interested and watched the teacher's demonstration attentively, several were slightly unsure of themselves when it came to working independently, and turned to support staff for help. Children in the nursery listen attentively to their teachers, and are enthusiastic about most the activities to which they are introduced. They show a good awareness of the routines and expectations set by staff.
17. Around the school and in lessons, pupils' behaviour is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. During break times pupils play well together, are obedient and polite, and take care of each other. No instances of aggressive conduct were noted, and no reported instances of bullying. In the dining hall, pupils quietly wait their turn and are well mannered, treating lunchtime as a social occasion. In lessons, most pupils are very well behaved, but there are a few pupils with emotional and behavioural needs who find it difficult to behave well all the time and who have a tendency to fidget, call out or distract others from their work. When moving from the classrooms to various places, for example, the hall or playground, pupils walk quietly and sensibly. In assemblies, most behave well and listen attentively, but there are some who find it difficult to sit still and to remain attentive throughout.
18. Relationships throughout the school community are very good and are a strength of the school. All pupils are treated equally, with SEN and EAL pupils being well integrated into school life. Most pupils are friendly and polite to each other and to adults who work in or visit the school. They respond readily to the requests and instructions of teachers, teaching assistants and midday supervisors. Pupils take great pride in their surroundings and are eager to show visitors around. They treat their own property and school property carefully and respectfully and keep the school tidy and free from litter. Pupils value and support the extra-curricular provision made by the school, with a significant number of them attending the clubs, which take place after school and on Saturday morning, and the very popular daily Breakfast Club. Opportunities to take responsibility are gladly accepted and are taken seriously, for example leading the class into the hall, or helping clear away books and equipment. Those pupils who are members of the School Council show mature attitudes, and a sense of responsibility beyond their years, in helping to make decisions about their school.
19. The level of attendance, as at the last inspection, is well below the national average, and the rate of unauthorised absence is very high. Attendance has not improved since the last inspection, in spite of the measures which the school has taken, supported by the education welfare service. Although the school day begins promptly, nonetheless irregular attendance by a number of pupils has a disruptive effect on their learning. The school has a number of children from families seeking asylum, who come from countries where children begin compulsory schooling at a later age. Some of these parents are less concerned about ensuring the children are always at school and this affects attendance rates. Pupils whose families are asylum seekers often leave the school with very little notice and no notification of where they are moving to. The school is obliged to keep these pupils on register for a number of weeks, and this is the major reason for the rate of unauthorised absence being so high. Registers are marked correctly in the morning and afternoon sessions and legal requirements are met.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The school has made good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This improvement has been maintained in spite of a high turnover in staff and also the fact that many teachers are not only new to the school, but also at the beginning of their teaching careers. In addition, the prior attainment and needs of pupils has changed considerably over the past few years and the school has adapted its provision very well to address this. Teaching in the school is consistently good, with a significant proportion being very good. In 89 per cent of the lessons observed teaching was good or better, and in 46 per cent it was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This aspect of the school's provision has been supported well by the senior management team. The good quality teaching results in the good progress pupils are making in their learning.
21. In the lessons seen in the Foundation Stage, the majority of teaching and learning was very good (58 per cent) and very little was less than good. In both the nursery and reception classes, the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well, to children of all abilities. Very good thought has been given to the deployment of nursery nurses and learning support assistants. As a result, children are constantly supported in their learning through encouragement and gentle questioning to help them understand and develop their skills. Resources are very well chosen and used, both to stimulate children's interests and also to help them understand more easily. Assessment of the progress children are making is frequent and very effective in helping to plan the next steps in learning, particularly in the nursery. The use of homework and its support for learning, which begins as soon as children enter the school, is outstanding.
22. The best teaching was seen in the nursery where it was very good in 80 per cent of lessons. Two teachers, one for two days and the other for three days each week, and two qualified nursery nurses work together closely. Their very good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, the provision of purposeful, focused activities, high expectations, excellent relationships and constant oral interaction with the children are some of the features of the very good teaching. Because of the very high quality provision, children make very good gains in most areas of learning.
23. Teaching is good in the reception classes, (86 per cent of lessons) with a high number (43 per cent) being very good. Work is usually well matched to children's abilities, enabling them to make good progress in their learning. The relationships teachers have with children are good and children want to do well for their teachers. Strategies are varied to reinforce learning, and this supports individual children's needs well. Where there are occasional weaknesses, these include insufficient purpose or structure to some activities, a lack of pace, and insufficient planning to ensure that the reception children are fully catered for in a mixed age class.
24. At Key Stage 1, nearly all of the teaching is at least good, (88 per cent) and a high proportion (40 per cent) is very good or better. Two excellent lessons were seen. Where it is possible to make an overall judgement about teaching in different subjects, in the majority of cases it is good. As a result of this good quality provision, pupils are developing very good attitudes and making good progress in their learning. The strength of teaching is significantly supported by the very good relationships teachers have with pupils. Teachers care about pupils as individuals and want them to do well, so pupils respond to this very positively.
25. Teachers' subject knowledge, understanding and confidence are good. They teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy well and encourage pupils to apply these in a range of subjects. The school's very effective procedures for linking assessment of previous work to future planning means that teachers plan very well for the next steps in learning

and this helps pupils to make good progress. Teachers know pupils well and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils respond to this well, working at a good pace and doing their best. Pupils of all abilities are sensitively supported and develop the confidence to show what they know and can do. The methods teachers use are very well matched to the needs of different subjects and also the groups and individual pupils in the class. Teachers are particularly good at managing discussions, where they ask questions which explore what pupils already understand, and challenge them to explain why they give a particular answer. Because of very effective questioning, pupils develop a very good knowledge of what they are learning and this helps them to make good progress. In individual activities, pupils are very well supported, either by the resources they are given to help their learning or by the very good deployment of learning support assistants. This is particularly effective in literacy and numeracy lessons and in scientific investigations. Although teachers and learning support staff always deal appropriately with pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, there are occasions when this interrupts the learning of other pupils in the class, particularly in whole class activities. The quality of marking is at least good and some outstanding marking was observed, where pupils could clearly identify when they had succeeded in their task and where to move on to next. This helps them to gain a very good knowledge of the progress they are making. Homework is used very effectively to support learning across a range of subjects and is very well matched to the abilities and needs of individual pupils.

26. Pupils with SEN are very well supported, both in class situations and also when working individually and or small groups. When they work with the special educational needs co-ordinator, teaching and learning are outstanding. The very effective individual education plans for SEN pupils are used well in lessons, particularly in supporting their progress in literacy and numeracy. This, together with the very good knowledge teachers have of pupils, ensures they make good progress towards the targets set. The teaching of more able and talented pupils is equally very good. Pupils are set challenging work and know that teachers expect them to do their best. As a result, they also make good progress in their learning, often achieving well above average standards.
27. In most lessons, teachers take care to involve EAL pupils in class discussions and activities. This enables them to contribute well to the lessons. The teachers and learning support assistants make good use of the pupils' individual targets, to identify what they need to learn next in relation to the subject being taught. Occasionally, in some whole class activities, the language used to explain things is too complex for some EAL pupils. As a result, these pupils sometimes understand little of what is said to them. This is partly because the individual targets pay too little attention to this aspect of the pupils' development. It is also because teachers do not have enough guidance on the vocabulary and grammar the pupils need to learn, in a structured sequence. This aspect is better when pupils are working in groups, particularly with learning support assistants, where EAL pupils are provided with extra vocabulary lists or are given further explanations of what words mean.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

28. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school for most its pupils are good. Especially good thought has been given to the specific needs of individual pupils, taking full account of their prior attainment, ability and ethnic background. The school meets statutory curricular requirements, including those for religious education. Appropriate sex education and awareness of the proper use of medicines are included in the good personal, social and health education programme. Schemes of work, based on national guidelines, provide good guidance for teachers, to ensure pupils make progress as they move through the school. These have been adapted well for the school's specific

needs. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been fully implemented and updated. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in English and mathematics and also in some other subjects. For example, in science pupils measure accurately and draw graphs to record their results. Some opportunities are missed because of the lack of recorded work in geography and history. Information and communication technology is used very well to extend learning in most other subjects. All staff take an active part in planning and developing the curriculum. This includes the involvement of learning support assistants, specialist teachers, parents and volunteer helpers.

29. The curriculum for the children in the nursery is excellent and it is very well taught by most adults who work with the children. Very good links are made between the areas of learning, and children's personal and social, and language development are given effective priority. The learning environment is very stimulating and well presented which motivates children very well. Children are provided with an excellent range of activities, including those in which they can engage in purposeful activities independently. Because of the very high quality provision, most children make very good gains in their learning during the time they spend in the nursery. The curriculum for children in the reception year is good overall, usually meeting children's needs well. There are a few occasions when activities do not cater as well for the reception children in the mixed age classes.
30. The provision for SEN pupils is very good. The detailed individual education plans meet pupils' needs very well and are used very effectively in lessons to promote good learning and progress. Pupils have access to the full curriculum and receive very good support. There is an effective balance of support in class and the opportunity to work in groups, or individually with the special educational needs co-ordinator or learning support assistants. This helps pupils to make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Likewise, the very good provision for the more able and talented pupils meets their needs very well and ensures they make good progress and achieve above average standards, sometimes well above. The provision for EAL pupils is good overall, especially in the group activities provided for them in lessons. However, they are not specifically identified in teachers' planning and so their language needs in whole class sessions are not met as well as they could be.
31. The opportunities for pupils to continue learning beyond lesson time are very good. There is a variety of clubs, which enhance pupils' intellectual, creative and social development such as Chess club, Computer club, Saturday Arts club and Breakfast club. The curriculum is also enriched by visits to theatres and museums.
32. The many very good links the school has with local businesses and organisations serve to broaden pupil's experiences and encourage their involvement with the wider community. The school plays an active part in the Community Library and Information Centre and the Milton Community Partnership.
33. The school has very good links with other educational institutions, working closely with other schools and colleges, especially the junior school to which many pupils transfer. Teachers from both schools ensure that the pupils' transfer is as smooth as possible. This support is being developed further, by encouraging pupils to form links through using information and communication technology. The school welcomes students from the secondary school and also a local college. Both the pupils in the school and the students benefit from this arrangement.
34. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, which is an improvement since the last inspection. It is demonstrated in the school's motto 'Caring, Sharing and Achieving which underpins most aspects of its life. Cultural development is good, while the provision for spiritual, moral and social

development is very good. Many good opportunities to develop spirituality are planned in the curriculum, especially in religious education, music and art. Carefully planned assemblies give pupils time to reflect on issues arising from the themes raised. Pupils are intrigued by a teacher playing the flute at assembly. They learn to appreciate their surroundings because teachers take care to make it stimulating and pleasant. This is reflected in the displays around the school, the fresh flowers on the dinner tables and the newly erected mosaic designed by the pupils. Pupils take great delight in learning about the wonders of the world, for example when discovering a tadpole in the pond.

35. The provision for moral and social development is also very good. Great store is placed on the teaching of moral values and on pupils understanding the importance of obeying rules. This is nurtured through "Circle Time" as part of the personal, social and health education lessons. Teachers and other adults in the school set a good example to the pupils, helping them to understand the difference between right and wrong. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well. Pupils are encouraged to work together in groups and share equipment and resources. They co-operate and play well together during playtimes and there are very few recorded instances of poor or oppressive behaviour. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to act as monitors, such as putting out equipment and helping to tidy up. The pupils on the School Council are encouraged to be responsible and take decisions about their school
36. The school provides good opportunities for cultural development. Pupils learn to appreciate their own culture through participating in local and community events, such as the South East Essex Schools' Music Festival. Visits to the school by musicians and artists, together with the visits pupils make to places of interest such as Milton Hall and a local farm, also contribute significantly to pupils' cultural development. This aspect of the school's work is now being promoted well through links with the Saturday Arts Club, which is also managed by the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school's aims of 'Caring, sharing and achieving' are implicit in all aspects of school life. It is determined to provide the best care that it is able for all its pupils, whatever their needs. The level of care and support given by staff is an outstanding strength of the school and contributes very well to pupils' learning and achievement. It provides a happy, caring and supportive atmosphere, where all pupils are valued as members of the school community. Staff know the pupils very well, and have a thorough understanding of their different needs and high expectations of what they can achieve, both academically and personally. Pupils know that there are sympathetic adults to whom they can go with any problem. This is an improvement on the good level of care identified at the time of the last inspection. Before pupils join the school, the school offers to visit them in their own home. Consequently when children start in the nursery, staff have often already acquired a good understanding of their personal and individual needs.
38. Health and safety receive high priority, and the governors are involved well in monitoring this area. Regular risk assessments are carried out, and a full safety audit has recently been completed, in which no issues were identified. Fire extinguishers are inspected each term and fire practices take place regularly and are timed and recorded. In the playground and elsewhere in the school grounds, pupils are well supervised and cared for. Several members of staff have received first aid training and most incidents and injuries are treated sensitively and properly recorded. There is no designated medical room, but any problems are dealt with in a room beside the staff room, and the school has well stocked first aid boxes. Healthy and safe living are promoted well through "Circle Times", physical education and science lessons, and additionally through the school's participation in the Healthy Schools Initiative. The school makes a conscious effort to raise pupils' awareness

of the requirements for a healthy diet. It has excellent working relationships with a wide and appropriate range of specialist support services, which greatly benefit SEN and EAL pupils. Procedures for child protection are detailed and explicit and most staff are aware of steps to be taken in any cases of concern. The headteacher is the designated responsible person and has undergone extensive training in this field.

39. The very good behaviour policy is consistently applied by all staff. School rules are displayed throughout the building as a reminder to pupils about appropriate behaviour, and each class agrees its own rules. Teachers reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong through praising good behaviour and explaining to pupils when they have done something wrong. Pupils' personal development is monitored exceptionally effectively as a result of the school's routines and the full picture staff have of pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
40. The school has good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress, particularly in the Foundation Stage and for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is because assessment is seen as an integral part of teaching and learning, and the assessment of what pupils have already learnt and can do forms the basis for future planning. A very effective marking policy supports the ongoing assessment of pupils' work, and is used well throughout the school, with some outstanding examples being seen. The good quality marking helps teachers to build up a very clear picture of the stage at which pupils are working and to easily measure the rate of progress they are making. The records of achievement kept for each pupil also give effective information on both standards and progress. The assessment for children in the nursery is of the highest quality, giving comprehensive evidence on most areas of learning, with a very effective colour coding showing exactly when each of the "stepping stones" in learning is achieved. Pupils are also involved in assessing how well they are doing. For example, a very good system related to the scheme of work in mathematics, helps both the teacher and pupils to track progress by using a graph produced by a computer program. Pupils also make a very effective contribution to their annual reports, with an analysis of how well they did during the year and where they need to move on to next. This involvement of pupils in assessment helps them to have a very good understanding of their learning. The school is still developing the assessment procedures for other subjects, although currently they are better than those seen in most schools.
41. The caring ethos of the school and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to give very effective support to SEN pupils. The procedures for monitoring and supporting their progress are very good. The early identification and intervention helps pupils' needs to be effectively met. The school has set up an awareness register of pupils about whom there is a concern and this helps to address their needs very well, often preventing them being placed on the full register. These pupils are then very carefully monitored to ensure the appropriate action is taken. Pupils' progress towards the targets in their individual education plans is monitored very regularly, and formally updated each term, with very good contributions from most who share in the education of the pupil, including their parents or carers. The school's caring ethos means that there are very good links with other agencies. The assessment and records are of a very high standard and are used particularly well to help pupils to build on and extend their skills. The very good level of care means that a good number of pupils can be removed from the SEN register.
42. The school pays very good attention to meeting the personal needs of EAL pupils, including through links with their parents. The pupils' language knowledge and skills are effectively assessed when they enter the school. Class teachers keep a close eye on how well they are integrating, and are alert to physical, emotional and learning difficulties. Suitable use is made of expertise from outside agencies. Currently the assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. However, a more effective assessment and recording system has very recently been introduced. The general targets set for pupils are

good, with very good thought being given to setting social and other learning targets as well as targets for the acquisition of English. These are effectively supporting pupils' progress in their work in English and literacy lessons, but less thought has been given to increasing pupils' language acquisition in other subjects, for example science or geography.

43. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are mainly informal, but they are outstanding. This is because most adults in the school, particularly the headteacher and her deputy, know individual pupils and their specific needs very well and are very supportive in helping them to make progress. Particularly good thought has been given to helping pupils with special educational needs develop confidence, and to helping pupils who are recently arrived in this country adjust to the demands of a different cultural and social system. In these aspects, the work of classroom assistants gives significant support.
44. The attendance of pupils is closely monitored by an attendance team appointed by the school, which makes regular reports to the governing body, and is continuously assessing ways of improving the rate of attendance. The school receives good and regular support from the Education Welfare Service, and parents are regularly reminded of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. Rewards are given out each term to those pupils with 100 per cent attendance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school has an exceptionally strong partnership with parents, which supports pupils' learning very well. Parents regard the school as very welcoming and appreciate the care and attention given to each individual pupil. They feel that they can easily approach staff and are confident that the school will deal well with any concerns they may have. They are consulted on most relevant school matters, and their opinions are respected and valued.
46. Parents are keen to support the school and their children in whatever ways they can and respond very well to any requests for help. A significant number give high quality help in school, for example with reading, design technology and art. From the time children start school, parents are encouraged to support their learning at home, through the "PACT" (Parents and Children Together) reading scheme. This has been an extremely effective and successful method of engendering parents' interest and involvement in their children's education and in raising standards, both academically and socially.
47. Parents are regularly invited to school events such as assemblies and concerts, and these are most well attended. The school is continuously reviewing ways in which it can involve and support parents. To this end it has hosted Numeracy and ICT projects, which have helped to develop parents' skills, thus enabling them to help their own children. The school has worked very hard to set up an effective partnership with parents of children who speak English as an additional language. Parents are given very good support and advice on how to help their children at home, particularly through the Family Literacy Group. Other, more recent developments include efforts to translate information sent home to parents. The Breakfast Club is viewed as another way of supporting parents, by offering them the opportunity to leave their children at school early in the morning if necessary. The Club provides pupils with a healthy breakfast and stimulating activities in a caring environment, giving them a good start to the day. These initiatives are valued by parents, especially those who are recently arrived in this country. There is an active Parent Association, which organises a variety of fund raising and social events, including the popular Christmas fair. The money raised by the Association is used to improve and enhance the school's facilities.

48. The school gives a high priority to keeping parents well informed about most areas of school life and the work their children are doing. There are regular opportunities for parents to meet staff to discuss their child's progress and teachers are readily available for parents who want to discuss concerns. Most written information produced is presented attractively and is usually translated or interpreted for the benefit of those parents who do not speak English. The annual reports, highlighted as an area of weakness at the last inspection, have been improved and now meet statutory requirements. They are generally informative, giving parents a good picture of what their child has learnt and setting useful targets for improvement in each subject. Parents appreciate the fact that reports are given out at the end of the Spring term, thereby allowing them time to support their children if there are any concerns. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date with most school events and activities, and serve as a useful reminder of forthcoming events.
49. Very good links are maintained with parents of SEN pupils. They are provided with very good information about the progress their children are making and also the support they can give at home.
50. The school has worked hard to develop its links with the parents of EAL pupils. For example, with the support of a governor, arrangements have been made to translate key documents into many languages. Additional initiatives, including a support group, help parents to understand what is expected of their children and how they can help their learning. These arrangements are very good.
51. The high quality of the school's relationship with parents has been maintained and further developed since the last inspection, and is a strength of the school. This partnership has been instrumental in helping to create a strong community spirit in a happy and caring school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher who have worked in close partnership to develop a whole school approach to improvement. The headteacher's vision is far reaching, including community involvement and the best possible education and achievement for each pupil. The school is involved in many initiatives to give the pupils as broad a range of opportunities as possible, and many of these initiatives involve the parents and carers as well. The school has maintained the strengths seen in this area at the last inspection, adapting its provision very well to meet the changing needs of its pupils.
53. The school has a hard-working team of teachers, many of whom are in the early years of their teaching career. Most are undertaking curriculum co-ordinator roles effectively, with those new to the role being very well supported by senior staff. The headteacher delegates responsibilities to both teaching and non-teaching staff and ensures appropriate training is provided. For example, one of the nursery nurses is responsible for co-ordinating the Breakfast Club and Saturday Arts Club. The award of the Investors in People status reflects the importance the school attaches to continuing professional development for most staff in order to raise standards. Similarly, one of the aspects for which Beacon Status has been awarded is staff development. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is very effective. An experienced mentor provides regular advice and support, and the new teacher is given opportunities to observe good teaching in this and other schools. The school is experiencing problems with the recruitment and retention of teachers, in common with many others. However, any new staff are trained and supported well, to become valued members of the team. The number, experience and quality of learning support assistants in the nursery and throughout the school is very good indeed. Many are well trained, and most provide very effective support for the pupils.

Office, midday and cleaning staff are valued members of the school community and are effective in their work.

54. The school strives for high quality teaching and learning and the members of the senior management team observe in classrooms and provide detailed feedback on strengths and any areas for improvement. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A mark of the success of this monitoring is that no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Senior staff feel one of the major impacts of the monitoring has been the improvement in the management of pupils who misbehave. Teachers' planning, pupils' work and records are monitored, and visiting consultants also undertake monitoring activities to support school improvement effectively.
55. As found in the last inspection, the school development plan is comprehensive and identifies appropriate priorities for development. It shows detailed analysis of the issues and gives good guidance on action to be taken. For example, each curriculum area has a very good action plan, with some subjects being identified as development areas and others as maintenance. Education Action Zone plans are included, and governor committee involvement is clearly identified, as are links with in-service training and the budget. This quality of planning is helping the school to make good improvements in its provision.
56. The school's financial planning is very good and funds, including grants for specific purposes, are effectively allocated to support current priorities. The headteacher and governors are provided with regular and accurate financial information, which helps to monitor the effectiveness of the school's spending. This is the result of the very efficient records produced by administrative staff. The school applies the principles of best value very well, and is also extremely successful in obtaining grants or sponsorship to benefit pupils. Office staff provide very good support to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school and new technology, including the computerised administrative system, is effectively helping its work.
57. Governors fulfil their statutory duties very effectively and are fully supportive of the school. They have five committees, each of which meets before the main governing body meetings in order to make effective reports. Some governors are able to visit school regularly and support pupils' learning, occasionally making more formal visits with a specific focus. In addition, a learning support assistant acts as a link governor, providing good liaison. Most governors are fully involved in regular reviews of policies and developments. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection. Many governors attend training arranged by the Local Education Authority and training is also arranged for the whole governing body. Some governors attend school in-service training days as well. Governors receive the school development plan in draft form and review it at this stage, offering useful advice on the final plan. They are kept informed of progress through their visits and the headteacher's detailed reports to them. Governors discuss pupils' achievements and the test results and recognise the difficulties with the high incidence of pupil and staff turnover. Governors celebrate the many successes the school enjoys, and are clearly aware of areas requiring further development and how best to address them. The school prospectus now meets statutory requirements.
58. The leadership and management of the provision for SEN pupils is outstanding. The co-ordinator has an extremely good knowledge of individual pupils and the expertise to ensure that their needs are fully met. This helps to ensure that the care given to these pupils is very good, often resulting in their removal from the register. The provision is very carefully monitored and evaluated, making sure that the needs of pupils currently in the school are provided for. The resources used to support pupils have been very carefully chosen to meet their specific needs and are helping them to make good progress. The

funds allocated for this aspect of the school's work are very effectively supplemented by the general budget, particularly in the provision of a good number of support assistants.

59. The provision for EAL pupils is managed well. For example, the school has bought many dual language books and tapes, to help children learn to read, and has done its best to find resources in the wide range of languages spoken. The books and tapes have been placed in classrooms, matching the texts to the languages spoken by the pupils in each class. Some books have also been placed in the school library, to give other pupils access to them. A new proforma for recording the pupils' language knowledge and skills has recently been developed, improving the information gathered when pupils enter the school. The school plans to use this as a basis for monitoring their progress more regularly and systematically, as part of its aim to raise their standards further.
60. The accommodation is light, well maintained and appropriate for young children. It is kept very clean, with the cleaner-in-charge ensuring that the nursery is freshly cleaned each lunchtime for the afternoon children. Teachers mount displays of pupils' work throughout the building to create a stimulating environment. Many worthwhile improvements to the building have been made recently. These include the provision of the nursery and garden, the computer suite and the development of the library, office area, staffroom and headteacher's/family room. Future plans include a Millennium Courtyard and development of the atrium into a community library and information centre. Many of these improvements have been made possible through the acquisition of grants from different sources. Most of these grants have been used for their intended purpose most effectively. There are still some weaker aspects of the accommodation, including the open plan nature of two classrooms, which causes some interruptions when pupils are engaged in noisier activities, the lack of a good sized grass area and a rather cramped classroom for one of the reception classes.
61. The school is well resourced for many curriculum areas, including excellent information and technology resources and very good book provision. New equipment for physical education is used well and high quality resources for science support the very good curriculum. Some instruments for music are borrowed, so the pupils can enjoy a range of experiences. Although the school has recently acquired artefacts for religious education, they have yet to be used.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. The school is fully aware of where it needs to continue to develop its provision in order to raise standards further. Many aspects of its work are of a high quality and in the vast majority of aspects improvement is good. Only one area has been identified as a weakness, although the school continues to make good efforts to address this.

- In order to promote further the rise in standards, continue to develop strategies to improve the level of attendance.

(See paragraph 19)

This is already identified as a priority area in the school development plan.

Governors may also wish to include these minor areas for development:

- Explore other ways for managing the behaviour of pupils with specific emotional and behavioural difficulties in whole class activities, so that their behaviour has less of an impact on the learning of other pupils in the class.
(See paragraphs 17 and 25)
- Encourage pupils to use their word building skills more when they encounter words which they do not easily recognise.
(See paragraphs 7 and 78)
- When introducing new work in whole class activities, make sure that it is always explained in language at a level that all pupils for whom English is an additional language can understand.
(See paragraphs 27, 30 and 42)
- Plan opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills more in history and geography.
(See paragraphs 28 and 79)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	41	43	11	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	107
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	27

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	67

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	9.56
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	5.74
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	16	21	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	12
	Girls	19	20	18
	Total	33	33	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (94)	89 (94)	81(83)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	12	14
	Girls	20	18	19
	Total	33	30	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (94)	81 (89)	89 (94)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	77
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	21.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	344,498
Total expenditure	342,984
Expenditure per pupil	2,541
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,777
Balance carried forward to next year	18,291

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	151
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	89	7	0	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	50	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	37	26	0	0
The teaching is good.	81	19	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	37	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	26	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	26	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	22	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	27	12	0	12

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

64. A major development since the last inspection has been the opening of the nursery in January 1998. This is purpose built and the staff had considerable involvement in its planning and design. It caters for children aged three and four who spend about two terms there. Currently there are 50 part-time children, attending either for mornings or afternoons. Children enter the reception classes in September or January of the year in which they become five, attending part time for two weeks, and then full time. Some of the older children in the reception year are in one of two classes which also have Year 1 pupils, whilst those children who joined the reception year in January are in a class comprised of just their year group.
65. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment, especially in their personal and social development and communication and language skills. Overall, standards are below those of children of the same age. Children make very good gains in the nursery and achieve well. Approximately one third of the children currently of reception age have not attended the school's nursery. The baseline assessment results show good achievement by many of the children who have attended the nursery, but considerably lower scores for those who have not. Therefore, the overall standards on entry to the reception classes are below that of the majority of children of this age. All children make at least satisfactory progress, and many make good progress in the reception classes and achieve well. However, there are a considerable number who do not yet reach the early learning goals, particularly in their personal and social development and their communication and language skills. Therefore, the overall standards on entry to Key Stage 1 are below average.
66. The quality of teaching and learning experiences offered are the result of the school's commitment to meet the needs of most children, whatever their abilities and interests. In the nursery, teaching is consistently very good in all the areas of learning and all adults contribute very well to children's learning, ensuring they make good progress. The overall quality of teaching for children in the reception year is good in all areas of learning, usually meeting children's needs well. There are a few occasions where activities do not cater as well for the reception children in the mixed age classes. The curriculum is good overall, being excellent in the nursery. This largely maintains the quality of provision for children in reception identified at the last inspection.
67. The nursery learning environment is very stimulating and well presented, with many opportunities for the children to engage in purposeful activities independently. There is a very attractive garden area leading from the nursery, which the children enjoy using daily, weather permitting. Because of the very high quality provision, most children make consistently very good gains during the time they spend in the nursery. The learning environment for pupils in the reception year is effectively organized, although it is not of such a high quality as in the nursery. In particular the classroom for the youngest reception children is rather small. Reception children have daily access to secure outside play areas and a suitable range of large and small equipment.
68. Very good induction arrangements help children settle quickly in the nursery and reception classes. These include home visits by staff and visits to the school for the children and their parents, which ensure a smooth, confident start to school for the youngest children. Parents are involved in their children's learning through the excellent Parents and Children Together "PACT" activities, based on books the children have selected to read. Parents

are well informed of the topics for the term through newsletters, and copies of the planned activities are displayed for parents to see as well.

Personal, social and emotional development.

69. Strong priority is given to this area in the nursery and the children make good progress . They understand the routines, settle happily and confidently to well planned activities when they arrive, and often persevere with these. For example, children co-operate well when playing with the sand, or when building a track for the train. They learn to take turns and behave well most of the time. If there are occasional examples of inappropriate behaviour, these are dealt with very effectively by an adult. Most children help to tidy the equipment away when requested. The daily snack time is a valuable opportunity to encourage social development as the children take turns to prepare the food and to hand it round, while the others remember to thank them as they sit quietly at tables to eat and drink. Some reception children find concentrating difficult on occasion, and again this area of learning is a high priority, ensuring that they continue to make good progress. Good story telling and discussions help them to stay focused. Often, when using the equipment outside, pupils work co-operatively and persevere, understanding the requirement to limit the number at each activity and to wear a badge to indicate where they are working. They are mostly enthusiastic learners and understand the need to treat each other and equipment with respect. However, because of poor prior skills, the majority do not reach the standards expected in this aspect by the time they leave the reception classes.

Communication, language and literacy

70. Children's language skills are often limited on entry to the nursery, and many opportunities are provided to develop these. The constant oral interaction with the children by most adults involved, with many questions to encourage a response, is very beneficial. Children enjoy hearing stories read well and often act out scenes from the story. They use the role-play area confidently, developing their communication skills. Children choose books from the very good selection available and discuss the pictures with adults. Some children are confident speakers, while others are much more reserved. Children recognise their name and practise writing it, some of the older ones unaided. There is still a wide variation in attainment in the reception year. Opportunities to develop the children's communication skills are well planned to support progress, for example, in an activity where children directed a blindfolded friend through a maze by using directional language. The role-play area is used well, and children engage in conversation in role as they buy produce in the garden centre. The focus on the author Eric Carle has motivated the children and they know the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' very well. The more able children write simple sentences, and have written lists, news and descriptions, for example of planting beans and their growth. The SEN children are beginning to write some conventional letters in conjunction with their invented script. They all practise writing their own name regularly and most can do this unaided now. Largely because the prior attainment of many children is below average in this aspect, only a minority reach the standards expected by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

Mathematical development

71. Many opportunities for counting, sorting and using mathematical language are planned effectively in the nursery. For example, children sort different seeds, selecting their own criteria, and discuss their decisions with the teacher. In another very good session, children compared sizes and weights of potatoes, using the terms, heavier and lighter as they experimented with balances. The more able children recognise numbers to ten as they sing 'Ten Green Bottles', but the SEN children do not yet recognise many numbers. In the reception classes, the majority of children count to ten and understand "one more or less". The more able count to twenty, add units together, complete repeating patterns and

recognise symmetrical shapes. In a very good lesson, the children effectively counted forwards and backwards on the number square their teacher used. They reinforced their knowledge of vocabulary associated with the passing of time and how to measure time, through purposeful activities. In this area of learning, the majority of children reach the standards expected by the time they leave the reception classes.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

72. Children make good progress in both the nursery and reception year in this area of learning. In the nursery, children plant seeds and know that they will need water and light to grow. Reception children measure and record the growth of their beans. In the nursery, children have studied mini-beasts and know how many legs they have. This knowledge develops well in the reception year as the children follow the life cycle of insects and learn the names of young and adult animals. The nursery children develop a sense of past and present by comparing photographs of themselves as babies and as they are now. Reception children are developing an early understanding of then and now as they compare old and new toys. Information and communication technology is introduced well to pupils in the Foundation Stage. In both the nursery and reception classes, children reach above average standards in this aspect. The youngest children can control the mouse to create pictures and make a jig saw. They change the size and colours of their drawings and select images. Children in the reception classes are confident and work independently. They effectively manipulate pictures, and the more able type a story to accompany these. Children operate tape recorders to listen to stories. They develop their skills in control technology by successfully operating a floor robot. By the time they leave the reception classes, the majority of children reach the standards expected in this area of learning.

Physical Development

73. In the nursery, children's physical skills develop effectively as they use large and small construction equipment and manipulate gardening tools. Their manipulative skills increase, for example, as they show careful use of the computer mouse, use scissors and complete jigsaws. The available outdoor areas for both nursery and reception children provide good facilities for large muscle development, though neither at present has climbing or balancing apparatus. However, the children use the school's adventure playground for these activities. Reception children show good control as they run and stop on command, and practise throwing, catching and skipping. The majority of children reach the standards expected by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

Creative development

74. Nursery and reception children make good progress in this area. They enjoy painting, and nursery children mix a colour with black and white to create light and dark shades. Children in the reception classes observe daffodils carefully when they paint them. As they painted a rainbow fish, the teacher demonstrated appropriately how to use different colours and keep them separate. Other opportunities for the nursery children include printing and making sock puppets, models and seed collages. They enjoy singing, and made seed shakers, comparing the different sounds. Reception children made models of creatures from play dough and cooked cakes, which they sold for charity. The majority of children reach the standards expected by the time they leave the reception classes.

ENGLISH

75. Results of the Year 2000 national assessments for seven year olds were below the national average for reading and close to the average for writing. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was average for writing and well below average for reading.

Compared with similar schools, the results were close to the average for reading and well above average for writing. Results were better in writing partly because of the very good emphasis which has been placed on this aspect. Results in reading were lower because the high proportion of EAL pupils means fewer pupils reached the average and higher levels. These results were lower than those of the previous years, but this is explained by a significant increase in the numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school. Last year, nearly half of the pupils in Year 2 had not been at Barons Court since the beginning of the reception year. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of EAL pupils admitted.

76. Attainment on entry to school is below average in language and literacy. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and, in the work seen, the standards reached by the majority of the current Year 2 pupils are close to the national average. Most pupils, including EAL and SEN pupils and those identified as talented, achieve well. Very good assessment procedures and appropriate individual educational plans ensure the work set for each pupil is at an appropriate level. Learning support assistants in each class provide very effective support for these pupils.
77. Most pupils listen attentively in lessons, although a few find this difficult. Speaking skills vary greatly. Some pupils are articulate, confident speakers, while others have a limited vocabulary. The standards they reach are affected by their prior attainment in this aspect, including whether they speak English as an additional language. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in speaking and listening activities. For example, Year 1 pupils use the well-presented role-play areas, which are currently garden centres, collaborating as they discuss activities. In a very good lesson, Year 1 pupils sat in a circle and described something positive about a friend, and EAL pupils were successfully included in this activity. Teachers throughout the school employ very effective questioning techniques, which encourage pupils to think about and justify their answers and opinions. The use of technical vocabulary is promoted well in some other subjects. For example, parts of a plant are labelled on the science work in Year 1 and mathematical vocabulary is displayed in most rooms. However, this identification of key vocabulary for different subjects is not widely used at present. Standards of speaking and listening are broadly average by the end of Year 2.
78. Pupils enjoy reading, and the school has a very wide selection of good quality fiction and non-fiction books in classrooms and the library. The more able Year 2 pupils read fluently, with very good expression. They identify favourite authors and stories and justify their opinions clearly. Less able pupils confidently tell the story from the pictures, recognising some words from the text. Pupils' skills in word recognition develop well, and they also use the pictures and the context to help them read. However, a number are hesitant when attempting to read unknown words by recognising sound patterns. Pupils use non-fiction books, the Internet and CD-ROMs to find information, for example in science, when Year 2 pupils researched different animals. Overall, standards in reading are similar to the national average. Teachers use books to enhance displays and some book areas have a focus on an author, to generate interest. Pupils use the library confidently and many read at home, with parental support, which has a positive impact on standards. The excellent "PACT" activities, usually set weekly, are often related to the book being read, reflecting the importance the school attaches to reading, and to parental involvement and support. The activities set are wide ranging and often challenging, and are appropriate for each individual pupil's ability.
79. A good range of writing is undertaken throughout the school, including stories, poems, letters, instructions and descriptions. The more able pupils in Year 2 write at length, sustaining their ideas well. Their handwriting is joined and neat, the punctuation used includes exclamation and question marks and speech marks, and the vocabulary is lively and interesting. The less able pupils are still not always sure about sentence punctuation,

and their handwriting is not joined. However, these pupils make good gains in their learning as they progress from their own jottings to conventional writing during Year 1. Pupils' retelling of traditional tales is celebrated through well-presented displays in the hall for all to enjoy. Some examples of pupils' writing skills being developed through other subjects were seen. For example, Year 2 pupils described seaside holidays in the past after hearing a local resident describe them. Year 1 pupils have written a 'Wanted' poster, describing the qualities they want in a good friend, in their religious education lessons. Pupils write well about their experimental work in science and write good instructions as part of their planning for design and technology. However, some opportunities are missed as there is little recorded work in history, geography or religious education. Overall, standards of writing are similar to the national average.

80. The quality of teaching seen was good overall, with some that was very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Very well planned lessons, very good preparation and use of resources and activities which were appropriate for pupils of differing ability, were most features of very good Year 2 lessons. The pupils made very good progress, with understanding how to use non-fiction books to find information, through using the index, and scanning the text to locate key words. In one class, pupils enjoyed using their small white boards to practise writing words of increasing difficulty containing the long 'ea' vowel sound, recognising the number of syllables in each word. In both Year 2 classes, learning support assistants had their own plans and supported their allocated group very effectively. Excellent teaching was seen when one pupil with special educational needs was taught on his own. The pupil was highly motivated by the activities used to develop his speaking and listening skills and his reading. The teacher challenged the pupil appropriately and showed excellent understanding of his needs. The few weaknesses seen on a minority of occasions include insufficient planning for the needs of different groups of pupils in the class, and ensuring most pupils can participate in the whole class word level work, particularly in the classes where there are more than one year group. The quality of marking is very good, often with reference to the learning objectives and giving points for improvement.
81. The literacy strategy is well established through the school. Teachers' weekly and individual lesson planning is detailed and appropriate, and assessment and recording procedures have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. Many initiatives support the development of pupils' literacy skills. These include the Family Literacy Project and reading and writing interventions, through the Education Action Zone funding. The subject is very well managed by an enthusiastic, knowledgeable co-ordinator who has monitored the quality of teaching and learning effectively, resulting in the improvement in standards.

MATHEMATICS

82. Results in the 2000 national assessments were well below both the national average and that of similar schools. Standards had remained the same over the past three years and not risen in line with national trends. This is because there has been a large number of pupils entering and leaving the school between the reception classes and Year 2 which has had a significant effect, particularly because new pupils had lower standards in mathematics. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are better this year and more pupils are working at a higher level. Some pupils in the current Year 2 are the first to have had the advantage of starting school in the nursery. Because their progress has been regularly assessed and monitored against appropriate targets, with learning activities well matched to their needs, they have achieved higher standards. As a result, although this year's standards are still affected by the turnover of pupils, it is to a lesser extent.

83. Part of the reason for the improvement in standards is because pupils are gaining a good understanding of the work they do. They are encouraged to explain how they work out their answers. Most pupils can do this and are beginning to organise their work and check it. The majority show a good understanding of place value and more able pupils apply what they have learned with smaller numbers, to very big numbers. They show a sound understanding of different 2 and 3-dimensional shapes. Pupils recognise patterns in number and collect data and process it accurately in the block graphs which they draw. They also use their number skills in some other subjects, for example in recording and measuring in science. Pupils process data on the computer, printing it out as pie charts as well as block or line graphs. Less able pupils are confident in adding and subtracting single digit numbers and they have learned most the addition facts to ten, beginning to apply this to numbers beyond ten. SEN and EAL pupils achieve well because they are given appropriate help in lessons. Very good provision is made for talented pupils, who are given the opportunity to develop their ideas. For example, when the class was looking for patterns in the five and ten times table, one pupil worked out the fifteen times table and then went on to explain a method of multiplying two, three digit numbers together.
84. The teaching of mathematics is good and has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching observed throughout the inspection was good overall and half the lessons seen were very good. Partly as the result of the numeracy strategy, teachers are especially successful in helping pupils develop a range of strategies for mental calculation. This is also helping to raise standards. Teachers plan effectively and set work at different levels to meet the needs of all pupils. They have a good knowledge of the pupils' abilities and ask appropriate questions in whole class sessions so that all are involved. Pupils use the correct terms because teachers emphasise the mathematical language, explaining it at the beginning, and reinforcing it at the end of lessons. This is particularly helpful to those who are at the early stages of learning English.
85. Teachers' introductions to lessons are lively and motivate pupils who, in turn, are keen to learn. Planning, which includes what pupils are expected to have learnt by the end of the lesson, is shared with the class, giving a clear focus to the lesson and ensuring pupils understand the purpose of the work they are doing. A sound foundation of basic skills is established in Year 1 where pupils recalled halves and doubles of numbers and revised the names of simple shapes, prior to being introduced to the idea of symmetry. Teachers ask challenging questions, assess pupils' knowledge, and encourage them to think for themselves. Consequently, pupils are attentive and eager to answer questions. In the best lessons, the pace and challenge are good and teachers use different activities and time targets to ensure that the majority of the class stay focused and work quickly. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and they make the lessons fun. They use games to motivate, and vary activities in order to repeat facts and still maintain interest. Very good class management and positive reinforcement leads to the majority of pupils' good behaviour and good progress. Learning support assistants are well informed and deployed well, both in behaviour management and to reassure and guide pupils. Teachers make good use of resources to demonstrate, explain and engage pupils' attention. Information and communication technology is used effectively to reinforce work done in class. For example, Year 1 pupils showed increasing skill in choosing the correct icons to draw symmetrical shapes. Teachers provide imaginative activities, which are well matched to pupils' needs. Time is used well at the end of the lessons to reinforce what has been learned and set targets for the next lesson. Marking is very good. Comments are both positive and encouraging and pupils are set a target for further improvement after each piece of work. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of their learning and what they are expected to learn next. They are given homework, which reinforces the work they have been doing in class well.
86. The curriculum, which is built around the National Numeracy Strategy, is good. Effectively planned activities interest pupils and help them learn easily, building well on their current

skills and knowledge. This, together with the high levels of good teaching, supports the good progress they make.

87. Mathematics is very well managed. The co-ordinators have a very good understanding of the subject and are continually developing and updating it. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and are very supportive of colleagues. Pupils' work is assessed and their progress tracked as they move through they school. The school makes very good use of information and communication technology to assist in this detailed assessment, and pupils are fully involved, so they know how well they are doing. Assessment has improved since the last inspection. The well-focused analysis of work is helping the majority of pupils to achieve well and to raise standards.

SCIENCE

88. The school has made good improvement in the quality of its provision since the last inspection, which is helping to raise standards. In 2000, in the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, nearly 90 per cent of pupils achieved the expected Level 2 or above, similar to the national average, but only eight per cent of pupils were recorded as attaining the higher Level 3, which was below the average. Inspection evidence shows that, this year, standards are higher and are around average overall. A similar number of pupils are reaching at least average standards, but there are a greater number of pupils reaching the higher Level 3. The majority of pupils currently in Year 2 reach at least average standards in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Their scientific enquiry skills are above average because of the very good provision for this aspect. Most pupils, including SEN, EAL, and able and talented pupils achieve well.
89. Younger pupils are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of topics. For example, they know the different sources of light and some properties of materials such as their texture. They have a sound knowledge of living things, for example the life cycle of a butterfly and the conditions which plants need in order to grow. All pupils' learning is promoted well through investigations, for example, they test materials to see how well objects roll or slide on different surfaces. They also enjoy testing how well they can identify foods through using the sense of taste, and sounds by identifying the object they hear. Pupils are making good gains in the enquiry and experimental techniques and the skills they need, and reach above average standards in this aspect of their work. These good standards are built on and extended well as pupils move in to Year 2. By the time they leave the school, most pupils have become very confident investigators, with a good knowledge of how to formulate a hypothesis and set up an experiment. In a very good lesson observed, pupils helped their teacher to devise fair tests to identify how water travels up the stem of a celery plant. Pupils have very secure knowledge and understanding in the range of topics they cover because they are actively learning and discovering facts for themselves. For example, by the time pupils leave the school, they can accurately identify plants and animals found in the school grounds, draw the life cycle of a plant, know which electrical circuits work and why, and accurately identify the forces of push and pull. Very good support for SEN and EAL pupils allows them to gain knowledge at a good level for their abilities and to record this pictorially. The more able and talented pupils are challenged well, often by being given questions for which they have to set up their own investigations. As a result, they reach standards well above those expected for their age. The above average standards pupils reach in their investigation skills are also supported very well by the high quality recording they are expected to achieve. Pupils set out their work in a very well organised way, using graphs and charts, including some they have drawn and others produced using the computer. Their diagrams are accurate and well labelled. The very good links made between these aspects of pupils' work in science, and their learning in literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology is supporting the good progress they are making.

90. Teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was seen. This helps pupils to make good progress in their learning. A significant strength of the teaching is in the way teachers implement the school's philosophy of encouraging pupils to learn through being actively involved. As a result, pupils enjoy their work in science very much. They concentrate well, developing a good understanding in lessons and consequently, a very good knowledge of what they are learning. Lessons are well planned, promoting the asking of questions, helping pupils to identify how best to find an answer and devising an activity to do this, for example in considering which dye would be best seen on the petals of a carnation. The very good support given to pupils of different abilities means they have the confidence to suggest different hypotheses without being concerned if they are wrong. Teachers are very good at explaining and demonstrating so that pupils can quickly move on to their investigative work, for example when finding out whether plants grow better in the sun or shade. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and motivate them well so that they work hard and remain on task. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed, particularly in helping SEN and EAL pupils to record their work. Overall, marking gives good support in helping pupils to improve, and some outstanding marking was seen. Homework is used very well to support learning, particularly for the more able and talented pupils who are encouraged to undertake their own investigations.
91. The curriculum is very good and meets the needs of pupils in this age group very well. Very good attention has been paid to ensuring that pupils build on and extend their skills and knowledge, as well as providing a two-year rolling programme to address the needs of pupils in the mixed age classes. The teaching of new topics is very effectively promoted through an investigative approach. The curriculum is enriched by the workshops, which the school organises each year for pupils and their parents. A significant strength of planning is that it is related very well to assessment, so that each activity effectively builds on and extends what pupils already know and can do. The effectiveness of assessment and planning is partly as a result of the very good marking procedures.
92. The co-ordinator is leading the subject very well. She has a very good understanding of how to promote learning in science and is giving very effective support to her colleagues. The very good attention paid to resourcing the subject means there are a good number of very good quality of resources, which are supporting learning very well. In addition, the school's grounds, in particular the very well designed pond area, stimulate pupils' interest and give good support to their learning.

ART AND DESIGN

93. During the inspection, only two lessons were observed, one in each year group. Evidence is also taken from the scrutiny of pupils' work including that on display. In those aspects seen, most pupils achieve appropriately and reach standards at least in line with national expectations. Where pupils have had the opportunity to work with professional artists, their work exceeds this. This maintains the standards seen at the last inspection.
94. Pupils are taught to observe closely and this helps them to draw and paint accurately, for example in the pictures they painted of Peter Rabbit. They are also developing a secure understanding of how to make the correct shade they want by mixing primary colours with white, or black. Different techniques are promoted well, for example, pupils made their own sketchbooks, the cover of which was made from a marbling pattern. The good attention paid to working in different media helped Year 2 pupils to complete some very effective still life drawings at a standard exceeding expectations. Pupils also draw and colour effectively using pastels, as seen in the Year 1 pictures of plants and Year 2 pictures of fruit. The paintings Year 2 pupils did in the style of Picasso and the prints they made from using polystyrene tiles are of an above average standard.

95. Lessons observation and the scrutiny of work shows teaching to be good and one very good lesson was observed. Teachers have a secure understanding of the skills pupils need to gain in order to work with different media, for example in print or clay work. The clear explanations and instructions given help pupils to concentrate and gain knowledge quickly. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond to this very well. In the very good lesson seen, pupils made good progress in acquiring new skills, where they designed and printed patterns in the style of Picasso. The progress pupils make in their learning over time is satisfactory, but very good attention is given to the wide range of skills needed and an appreciation of the effect and style of other artists which pupils try to imitate in their own work. Very good links are made between the learning in art and in other subjects. For example, pupils made tessellating pastel patterns as part of their work on shape in mathematics, and plant drawings as part of their work in science.
96. The curriculum, which is based on a new national scheme of work, is satisfactory at present, but good progress has been made in adapting it to the needs of pupils. The full range of media is covered, with some design work being for a specific purpose, for example in designing the Millennium Garden for the school. In addition, the introduction, in October 2000, of a Saturday Arts club is contributing exceptionally well to enriching the provision and raising standards. The good links being built up with artists who contribute to the club enables the school to capitalise on their expertise. This resulted in pupils making good gains in their knowledge of the work of Picasso and producing their own work in a similar style, to a standard above expectations. The school has made very good improvement in its provision since it was last inspected when art was judged as "not yet an exciting part of the curriculum". Further links are planned, with the subject co-ordinator and arts club co-ordinator liaising very well to promote a high quality provision for pupils. The well-qualified subject co-ordinator carries out her duties very well.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. No teaching was observed during the inspection. Evidence is taken from watching pupils working under the supervision of learning support assistants and parents, and from displays and photographs of work. Most pupils make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge to achieve well. By the time they leave the school, the majority reach standards above national expectations. This is because the school has made very good links between the designing and making processes. The school has made good improvement in this aspect of its work since it was last inspected.
98. The design process and the level of thought which pupils put in to this means they reach above average standards in their planning. They show a good understanding of the appropriateness of the materials, how they will join these and the tools they will use. Pupils' plans show originality and creativity, for example in the wind up toys they design and make. For this topic, an able pupil designed and made a model clock representing a nursery rhyme, where a wind up mechanism helped a cat to climb the clock and a mouse to exit at the back. Pupils' knowledge of structures and mechanisms also helps them to make moving vehicles of a good quality, and effective stick puppets, with great care taken in the decoration. These models were of a good standard. The encouragement given to pupils as they make their designs helps them to adapt and refine their models well.
99. Evidence taken from the scrutiny of completed work and the observation of pupils working on a task shows that teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good understanding of the skills and knowledge which pupils need to acquire. They explain things clearly and encourage pupils to think very hard about how to achieve the effect they want. As a result, pupils are making good gains in their skilled use of tools and materials, resulting in secure joins and effective movement. Teachers have high expectations and this motivates pupils very well ensuring models are always very carefully finished.

Independence in learning is particularly well promoted through the good organisation of resources, such as the well-labelled trolley of tools seen in each classroom. In addition, the emphasis put on pupils making their own decisions and explaining why they had reached them, helps them to understand their learning very well. The good arrangements for pupils to work in small groups under the close supervision of adults also supports progress. Parents give very good support in this area, and learning is very well promoted through the projects which are set for pupils to do as homework.

100. The curriculum, which is based on a national scheme of work, is good. Good attention has been given to building on and extending pupils' skills at a rate well matched to their age and ability. Very good links are made with other subjects such as science, where pupils identify the force needed to help their model move and English, when pupils write and then act a play with the puppets they have made. The subject co-ordinators are working very effectively to develop the provision and promote high standards. The subject is well resourced, with good thought being given to the specific needs of this age group.

GEOGRAPHY

101. Evidence is taken from work on display, one lesson, teachers' planning, preparation for a local walk and discussion with some pupils. In those aspects seen, pupils achieve appropriately and reach standards in line with national expectations, as at the time of the last inspection. There is little recorded work available, apart from class displays.
102. Through locating some holiday destinations on a world map, pupils in Year 1 learn where different places are. The use of resources including some coins in foreign currencies, pictures of famous landmarks and dolls in national costume help pupils' developing understanding of different places. Pupils are studying the local area and have found their home on a street map and practised writing their address. Having discussed what might attract people to Southend, pupils went on a walk to see some of the landmarks such as the Pier, Pavilion, Bandstand and Clifftop Gardens. On a well-prepared worksheet, they expressed their opinions about the attractiveness of each landmark. In previous topics, pupils have drawn a simple map showing their route to school and designed a park, having decided which features to include.
103. Year 2 pupils compare Southend with the fictional Scottish Isle of Struay. Their maps of the island show developing skills in map making, identifying the main landmarks, such as the few shops, jetty, post office and a simple key for other features. They have drawn up a list of differences between the small, rural island and the urban community of Southend. This comparison of different places was developed effectively in the lesson seen. Pupils identified features of seaside resorts abroad from travel brochures, and prepared advertisements, posters or postcards about these places, which supported their literacy development. They were interested in the work and discussed the features enthusiastically.
104. Teaching in the one lesson seen was satisfactory although this limited evidence means that it is not possible to make an overall judgement about teaching. Improvements since the last inspection include the completion of the policy and scheme of work. There is a good supply of resources for the subject and the local environment is used well to support learning. The recently appointed co-ordinators are enthusiastic and have identified appropriate priorities to raise standards and improve provision. These include further development of geographical vocabulary and using geography to help improve pupils' literacy and numeracy.

HISTORY

105. History was not being taught during the half term of the inspection and judgements are based on a small amount of recorded work, together with evidence from some class displays, teachers' planning and discussions with Year 2 pupils. This indicates that the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and, in the aspects seen, reach standards similar to those expected for their ages, as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils report that they enjoyed their study of Florence Nightingale particularly, and they remember details of the wartime conditions she encountered. The video they watched helped the pupils understand how she and her nurses improved the conditions endured by the injured soldiers.
106. The youngest pupils develop an early understanding of how things change over time as they compare old and new toys. In Year 2, the comparison of seaside holidays in the past with holidays today enables pupils to develop this understanding further. For example, they have a clear knowledge of the different types of clothing worn, amusements available and how buckets and spades have changed over the years. Pupils' understanding is supported by effective use of a range of sources of information, including photographs, maps, post cards and books. In addition, pupils remember clearly the talk given by a visitor to the school, about seaside holidays years ago. They had prepared questions to ask the visitor and the talk led to some well-informed writing, which enhanced their developing literacy skills.
107. As no lessons were observed, it is not possible to make a judgement about teaching. The school has an effective history policy giving clear guidance to staff and is following a scheme of work, based on national guidance, which has been updated since the last inspection. There is a useful range of resources, which have a positive impact on pupils' developing knowledge and understanding. The recently appointed co-ordinators have an appropriate vision for the subject, which includes stimulating pupils' interest to bring history alive, and developing historical vocabulary. At present, pupils do not record very much of their work individually, through for example, writing or drawing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. At the time of the last inspection information technology was judged to be in line with national expectations. Standards have risen and, by the age of seven, the majority of pupils now reach standards that are above those seen nationally. Most pupils are achieving very well for their age and abilities. Pupils use computers with competence and confidence for a wide range of applications. In English, pupils achieve good standards in communicating and handling information through effective application of word processing skills. They can write sentences and refine them by adding or deleting words and correcting spellings. In mathematics, pupils collect data to create block graphs and record their own progress in mathematics by charting it on line graphs. They draw "hundred squares" and highlight the two, three and four times table. In science, Year 2, pupils are able to access information about animals and their habitats on both a CD ROM and the Internet.
109. The provision for information and communication technology is excellent and the school has recently been awarded Beacon Status for this aspect of its work. There is a computer suite, which has recently been updated. In addition, there is at least one computer in each classroom and the school is in the process of setting up more. The computer suite is well managed by a very knowledgeable learning support assistant who works closely with the teachers. Pupils are taught in groups, and have the advantage of having three lessons each week in the computer suite and the opportunity to practise the skills they have learned in the classroom. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of information technology and how it supports most areas of the curriculum. Their planning is good and

is shared with the learning support assistants who often teach the groups. Teachers use technical language effectively and this supports the development of pupils' understanding. Most the relevant vocabulary is displayed and explained to pupils as they are introduced to new aspects of the subject. Pupils own enthusiasm also contributes to the good progress they make.

110. There is a good range of software supporting most areas of the curriculum, especially for English and mathematics. For example, Year 2 pupils use a program which assesses what they have learned in mathematics. It analyses their answers and gives the teacher a clear idea of which precise areas need to be developed. Teachers build this information into their planning and are able to set specific targets for individual pupils. It clearly shows the good progress most pupils are making in mathematics.
111. The subject is very well managed and is being continually developed, as new technology, appropriate to the pupils, becomes available. The scheme of work and assessment of the subject follow national guidelines and are exceptionally well implemented. There have been very good initiatives to involve parents in the "Family ICT Project" in conjunction with the local college. Parents run an after school Computer Club that is very well supported. Pupils who attend the Breakfast Club also have the opportunity to use the computers as one of their activities. Computers in the suite and those around the school are constantly in use and are an integral part of pupils' learning. This is a significant factor in the above average standards they reach.

MUSIC

112. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils attain the standards expected for their age. This maintains the standards seen at the last inspection. Pupils enjoy musical activities and join in lessons enthusiastically. This, together with the very clear planning and good teaching, means that the majority make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Pupils sing familiar songs with enthusiasm and learn new songs quickly, listening to phrases and repeating them. They sing in tune and remember the words accurately. Pupils compose and perform simple pieces to accompany familiar stories.
113. Teaching is good. One lesson per week for each class is taught by a specialist teacher. Lessons link well to the stories and poems pupils read in class. There is a good balance between listening and performing, and pupils are given opportunities to practise new skills, such as articulating difficult phrases and clapping different rhythms. Pupils are shown how to hold and play the instruments correctly. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils played percussion instruments sensitively, keeping in time and playing different rhythms to represent the animals in their story. More able pupils can keep the pulse of the piece and lead the rest of the class. Pupils join in singing, clapping rhythms and playing instruments enthusiastically. In assemblies they listen to music that is chosen to fit in with the theme. The singing is helped by a firm accompaniment on the piano or the flute. Pupils take part in the South East Essex Schools Music Festival and all pupils are involved with musical productions.
114. The music curriculum is well planned and co-ordinated by a team, which includes a music specialist. There is a new scheme of work that enables class teachers to teach confidently, building on what has been taught previously. Visiting musicians enable pupils to experience music from other countries, such as the demonstration of African drums.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. In the aspects of the subject seen, standards in physical education are at least in line with national expectations. Most pupils achieve well. As a result, in gymnastics the majority of pupils reach a good standard and this means standards have improved since the last

inspection. Pupils work with good control and balance and are able to put movements together to build up sequences.

116. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and emphasise the importance of moving safely. Pupils co-operate well and take appropriate care when moving around the hall and in setting up apparatus. In an excellent Year 2 lesson, the brisk pace and time targets that the teacher set motivated pupils well. As a result, they remained fully active and interested for the whole lesson, responding very well to the high challenge. Teachers make good use of demonstrations to illustrate good practice, and make constructive comments that help pupils to improve their skills. For example, in one lesson, pupils were encouraged to look up when balancing along the bar and to point their toes when holding a balance helping them to reach good standards. Pupils are encouraged to make helpful suggestions about each other's performance. Very good use is made of ongoing assessment and pupils are praised for achieving previously set targets and told what they can do to improve further.
117. The range and quality of resources is good. The scheme of work helps teachers to plan lessons well, so that pupils systematically develop skills from year to year. Good provision is made for after school football and tennis coaching. Unfortunately, this has to be done on the playground as there is no field. The imaginatively designed playground equipment contributes to the pupils' physical development

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

118. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning to achieve appropriately. They gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Christianity and some of the other world religions, for example Judaism, and begin to develop an understanding of the impact of religious teaching on people's lives. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils reach the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus. The knowledge and understanding they gain is helping their personal and social development well. This maintains the standards seen at the last inspection.
119. Pupils know that believers in many religions communicate with a deity through prayer. They know that symbolism is important, as in the fact that Christians call Jesus "The Light of the World" because they believe he helps them to see things more clearly. Pupils know that artefacts, such as the Menorah are important in religious belief and practice, and that many religions have sacred texts. They understand that many religious texts contain stories which help to teach people about God, for example that the story of Jesus calming the storm teaches Christians about his miraculous powers and that he will help people in need.
120. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection, but, together with the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, it is evident that teachers have a sound expertise and are teaching the skills and knowledge appropriately. A strength is, that pupils are asked to reflect on what the teaching behind a story or a celebration would mean. Good discussions help pupils to listen carefully and explain this well and then link it to their own response. This gives good support to their personal development. In a good lesson observed, an effective range of practical activities met the needs of pupils very well, in addition to helping them understand the importance of The Bible to Christians. For example, some pupils made a scroll in which they will write their retelling of a Bible story.
121. The curriculum, which is based on the locally agreed syllabus, is satisfactory overall, but is being adapted well to meet the specific needs of pupils and to effectively build on and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. A good feature of the provision is the way religious belief is linked to its impact on people's lives. Pupils then consider their own response in similar situations. For example, pupils know how important rules are in

different religions and what some of these rules are. They then use this knowledge to help write their own class rules. The Chair of Governors, who is also the minister of a local church, visits the school regularly to take assemblies, and these occasions also contribute well to pupils' learning. The new co-ordinators have made a good start to developing the subject, for example in auditing resources and organising topic boxes which contain a good range of resources including artefacts.