

INSPECTION REPORT

OLD FORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bow

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 131858

Headteacher: Amanda Phillips

Lead inspector: John Lilly

Dates of inspection: 21 to 23 June 2004

Inspection number: 265007

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	634
School address:	Wrights Road Bow London
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Marian Williams
Date of previous inspection:	30 May 2001

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Old Ford is a much larger than average primary school with 634 girls and boys on roll. It serves a multi-racial and cultural community that faces significant social and economic deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. Similarly, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is high and the number of pupils for whom English is not their first language is very high. A high proportion of these pupils are at an early stage in learning English, especially in the nursery and reception classes. The largest cultural group are of Bangladeshi heritage and most of these pupils speak Bengali or Sylheti. These pupils are usually Muslim. The next largest group are white/British. There are many other races and cultures represented, including a significant number of refugees and immigrants from Europe. The current headteacher took up post in April 2003, following a period when the headship of the school changed five times in six years. The management, maintenance and development of the accommodation are part of a local authority private funding initiative (PFI).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12487	John Lilly	Lead inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Religious education Personal, social and health education
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3574	Kanwaljit Singh	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Information and communication technology (ICT)
22180	Shree Lekha Mistry	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	English
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	History Geography Science
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Old Ford is a good school and improving rapidly. Until a year ago, the school had many weaknesses. The pupils were neither learning properly nor developing as young people capable of benefiting from their schooling. They are now. This is mainly due to the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She has very high standards, inspires others and knows how to turn a weak school into a very good one. Her leadership has created a determined team of teachers, teaching assistants, governors and many partners from the business and wider community. Together, they are working in partnership to raise standards and they do not intend to give up until Old Ford is an excellent school. This is because they share a passion for giving all pupils the deal they deserve and providing parents with a school they can be very proud of. Teaching is good and pupils are now achieving well because adults have shown them they can. The school is now an orderly, caring, purposeful and determined community. Very good leadership by managers and subject leaders helps staff to gain the very high skills they need. No child is unimportant and all receive the expert help they need. The school recognises that in just a year it has come a very long way but there is still more to do because pupils have yet to achieve the good standards they are capable of achieving, once they have had time to benefit from the much improved quality of education the school now offers. Pupils say how much they enjoy school because it is now a place to be proud of and a place in which they can be proud of themselves. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher drives improvement. She is backed and supported, expertly and in full, by other managers, the local education authority and partners from the business and wider community.
- Teaching is usually good or better and this creates pupils who are keen to and do learn.
- Teachers do not use assessment information enough to help pupils to understand how they can improve their work.
- Parents are not involved enough in helping their children to learn.
- Pupils are well behaved, work hard and relate very well to each other and adults.
- The school skilfully identifies and finds ways to overcome the pupils' problems with their learning or managing their own behaviour.
- Unsatisfactory attendance and poor punctuality hinder the progress of too many pupils.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently balanced or broad and, therefore, pupils do not receive the richness in learning they need.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection, which identified serious weaknesses in the school. Most of these improvements have been within the last year. Through determination and commitment, most but not all of these weaknesses have been rectified and many are now strengths. Attainment is still low because pupils have not had time to catch up, even though their learning and achievement are now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	E	E	B
mathematics	E	E	E	D
science	E*	E*	E	D

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

Achievement is good. Children join the nursery with very low attainment and many cannot speak English. They make a very good start to their education, making good progress and achieving well. Even so, most will not attain all the goals set for the end of the reception year. They will, however, join Year 1 as keen learners able to gain from the good teaching. Attainment in Year 1 is already closer to average standards. Compared with all schools nationally, attainment in national tests overall is very low. Even in 2003, however, results in national tests at the end of Year 6 showed that pupils made satisfactory progress when compared with similar schools. Currently, all pupils are making good progress throughout the school; their keenness and much better attitudes to learning mean they are able to benefit from the much improved teaching. All pupils achieve well, although Year 6 pupils have not had enough time to catch up with the learning they have missed. **Personal development is good** because provision is good and highly effective. Behaviour and attitudes within school are both good, underpinning the school's improvement. Even so, attendance is still unsatisfactory and punctuality at the start of the school day is poor.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school offers a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is good and often very good, and this creates and builds upon the good attitudes to learning of the pupils. They are keen to do their best. The curriculum is satisfactory and places very high priority on the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy because these are the essentials of all learning. This is wise but has led to an imbalance and lack of breadth in the curriculum, which the school has sensible plans to remedy. Standards of care are high and this makes pupils confident and happy learners. Very strong partnerships with businesses, the local education authority, colleges and universities and other schools is a major factor in the school's improvement. There is, however, insufficient involvement of parents in support of their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, and the leadership of the headteacher outstanding. The governing body makes a very good contribution to the school's improvement, giving the school direction, vision and challenging targets to meet. The contribution of governors from business has brought a rigour and expertise that has given the school the strength to overcome problems that at first would seem insoluble. Strong and wide partnerships have increased considerably the resources available to the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils are proud of their school and value highly their teachers and teaching assistants. Most parents value the school but some still remain critical. Their criticisms may have been warranted in the past but are not now.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use assessment more fully to help pupils to understand how they can improve their work.
- Involve parents more fully in helping their children learn.
- Find better, new and additional ways to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure the curriculum is broader and more balanced, including a better range of activities outside lessons and giving all subjects appropriate priority.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is below average. All pupils make good progress and their achievement is high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with the most barriers to their learning make good progress and are achieving well.
- Good teaching alongside an innovative curriculum is helping pupils to catch up with the learning that they had previously missed.
- Standards in literacy are still low, and this holds back learning in all subjects.
- Some able pupils do not reach their potential, especially in the higher years.

Commentary

1. Children join the nursery classes with very low attainment and many cannot speak English. They settle quickly and are soon making good progress and their achievement is good. By the end of the reception year, despite this good progress, attainment is still low and a majority will not meet the goals set nationally for the end of the reception year.
2. This good progress continues in Year 1, not only because the teaching is good but because the pupils are now keen and eager learners. Attainment in Year 1 is closest to national averages. Pupils in Year 2 make good progress and achieve well, but their attainment remains low. This is in part due to their very low starting points when they joined the school and in part because they have not had time to benefit fully from the much, but recently, improved teaching.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	12.2 (14.0)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	12.9 (12.7)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	13.8 (14.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 77 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress and achieve well. Even so, teachers have to work hard to help them make up for previously unsatisfactory teaching and learning, and attainment is still low. The first signs, however, of the benefits of much better teaching and learning are beginning to appear, especially in Year 5. Even so, attainment in Year 6 remains very low because these pupils have the most catching-up to do.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.3 (24.9)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	23.8 (25.3)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	25.5 (25.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 77 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The signs of improved attainment throughout the school are clear, but there is much to do. Realising this, the school has designed and implemented highly innovative and effective ways to help pupils to catch up especially, but not exclusively in speaking, listening, reading and writing. These initiatives are very successful for all pupils and have raised the achievement considerably of pupils who have the most catching-up to do, those with special educational needs and those for whom managing their own behaviour is a problem. A key skill in teaching, namely the way teachers model structured and clear English, and the fact that teachers expect pupils to use the same language when speaking, help all pupils. This approach helps those who are learning English as an additional language in particular and they make rapid progress in their acquisition of English. This improved use of ‘talk’ is rapidly improving learning and making improved attainment possible. Although satisfactory, the provision for the most able pupils is less good and some do not meet their potential.
5. Progress and achievement have improved significantly since the last inspection. Improvement in attainment when compared with national standards is inevitably lower than average because improvement takes time even when progress is good. There is, however, a strong upward trend.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and unauthorised absence are unsatisfactory and punctuality poor. Even so, when pupils are in school they have good attitudes to their learning and they behave well. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and social development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to learn and to accept responsibility.
- Attendance is too low and there is too much unauthorised absence.
- Punctuality when arriving at school is poor.
- Too many parents do not regard attendance and punctuality as essential to success at school.
- The school effectively fosters the pupils’ desire to learn.
- The school has high expectations of pupils’ behaviour and manages it well.
- There is a strong sense of a caring and purposeful community within the school.
- Different ethnic groups are fully integrated; there is little or no racial tension.

Commentary

6. Attendance was poor in the years 2000-2002. While still below average, it improved in 2002-2003 due to stronger management; this better attendance has been maintained and shows some signs of continuing to improve. Unauthorised absence, however, is still much higher than average. Punctuality to school is poor, especially in Years 1 and 2, though, once in school, pupils are punctual to lessons. The school, with good help from the appropriate agencies, makes strenuous efforts to remind parents of their responsibility in this area but with limited recent success. The ways to improve attendance are fairly standard and the school has yet to find additional ways to improve it.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	2.7
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

7. Though both pupils and parents expressed some concern over behaviour, inspection evidence shows that the school’s consistent application of its behaviour management strategy is having a positive effect. Pupils recognise, and try hard to meet, their teachers’ high expectations of behaviour. They are keen in

lessons and willing to accept responsibility when it is given. They are friendly, orderly and co-operative. The minority who cause occasional problems are well managed by teachers and other staff throughout the school. Though the number of exclusions has risen slightly this year, the number of pupils involved is fewer. There were no permanent exclusions. The school's provision for pupils with challenging behaviour is of high quality and is effective in helping them to improve.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	134	4	0
White – Irish	6	1	0
Mixed - Any other mixed	23	3	0
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	200	1	0
Black/Black British – Caribbean	9	2	0
Black/Black British – Other	16	1	0

8. In addition to the reduced number of pupils being excluded, fewer pupils now require behaviour support programmes. Being told they 'disappoint' their teachers is usually enough to put them back on track.
9. Pupils work and play well together; there is no evidence of racial tension. On the contrary, pupils play happily in small groups of all ethnic heritages. A number of parents identified bullying as a cause for concern but inspectors found no evidence to support this being a major issue. There is a strong community 'feel' to the school. Provision for personal development is good. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of, and respect their own and others' opinions and feelings, and school assemblies provide very good opportunities for reflection and an appreciation of issues facing society. Pupils know, understand and accept rules for their behaviour and clearly distinguish between right and wrong. They collaborate and share well, and the older pupils demonstrate a very good social awareness as school councillors, monitors and playground buddies. In short, they are very responsible citizens of the school community. Cultural development is good. Displays, assemblies and the music club's repertoire are three ways in which the school successfully promotes multi-cultural understanding.
10. Since the last inspection, the school has built upon the good climate for learning at that time. Similarly, it has built upon the good attitudes, behaviour and relationships so that they underpin good learning. Unauthorised absence and lateness remain too high. Pupils' spiritual development has improved from satisfactory to good, social development has improved from good to very good, and moral and cultural development continue to be good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good throughout the school with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Pupils' learning is good whatever their ability or the problems they may have to overcome.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan interesting lessons with activities that suit each level of pupils' ability.
- Teachers use very clear and structured language and expect pupils to reply using the same type of speech.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a strong 'presence' in the classroom that builds a feeling of mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- Pupils work hard and are eager to learn.
- Homework is not used consistently as an aid to learning.
- Marking does not show pupils clearly enough how to improve.

Commentary

11. There has been a vast improvement in the quality of learning and teaching since the last inspection. Teachers now teach with expertise and confidence. Pupils value the care their teachers and teaching assistants take and catch their enthusiasm. Consequently, they have become eager learners who are keen to do well.
12. The lessons that were observed covered almost every part of the curriculum and every type of specialised group work. The usual teaching was at least good and almost one half was very good or excellent. The quality of learning and degree of achievement were equally good, although at a slightly lower level than the teaching; for example, very good learning was rare. This is because until a year ago, the pupils did not know how to learn and, although they do now, they have some skills still to learn. A key reason why achievement is improving is that pupils are now eager for success and to play their full part in that success. The best teaching is of literacy but that is only relative to the other good teaching. This good and very good teaching has the following features, and pupils say that it is these features they value most:
 - Teachers gain the respect and trust of pupils, often using humour.
 - Teachers use very clear and structured language to explain the objectives of a lesson and its content. They expect all pupils to follow their example when replying.
 - Teachers plan lessons very carefully and skilfully to match the varying learning needs of the pupils. This has high impact because of the very productive teamwork between teachers and very skilled teaching assistants.
 - Teachers have strong but very positive behaviour management skills.
13. This inspection shows that when teaching is only satisfactory or, very rarely, unsatisfactory, the progress of pupils slows considerably and achievement is low. This is because most pupils do not yet have the skills to learn without skilled, expert and dynamic help.
14. From nursery to Year 6, pupils are gaining, and to a large extent have gained, the routines, skills and attitudes for learning they need if they are to achieve well. They listen carefully, think about what they hear and try to meet the purpose and objectives of the lessons in their own work. They are highly collaborative as when discussing a problem or new idea in 'talk partners'. They stick at a task even if they find it difficult. The school asks pupils to call adults by their first name. This was carefully considered as the best way of building relationships between adults and pupils. This strategy has been very successful, creating a bond based upon mutual respect and trust between teacher and learner. The

school has a coherent array of specialised and highly focused support groups and setting arrangements and these strategies are successful; teachers can focus their teaching and pupils gain confidence by doing work well suited to their needs. Even in reception, pupils move easily, quickly and calmly between these groups, already able to relate immediately with different adults and learn from their different skills.

15. Both specialised and general teaching for pupils with special learning needs, behavioural needs, those learning English as an additional language and those needing to catch up with their learning are very good. Pupils value and appreciate this highly focused teaching. In specialised literacy groups, the pupils find the structure, pace, challenge and very high expectations both exciting and very rewarding. All staff are well trained in supporting pupils learning English as a new language and these skills are very evident in all teaching. The specialist teaching in the learning support unit for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties is extremely effective and highly skilled. The initiative to improve literacy is very successful because teachers and teaching assistants teach very well and with pace and passion. This teaching balances very skilfully the learning to read and write with improvements in attitudes to learning. There is some focused teaching for very able pupils, but this remains an area for further development.
16. Some parents felt that homework was not used consistently or well. To a significant extent this is true. Homework does not play the part it should in learning and, therefore, opportunities are missed to extend and consolidate learning and to involve parents in their children's learning.
17. Marking is conscientious but too rarely shows a pupil how to improve. Assessment of learning is good although best in those subjects that the school has made a priority. This allows the school and teachers to track the progress of each child and act quickly when a gap is identified or progress slows. Assessment for learning, that is the continual feedback to pupils on why they succeed, why they fail and what they need to do to improve, plays a part in most teaching but does not as yet play the very high part the school wants it to play. School planning has made training in these skills a priority for September 2004 and the programme for this training is already in place. A very good example of these skills was in a lesson where the teacher said, 'Use your thinking thumbs!'. This encouraged pupils to think through how they could improve their own work. For the above reasons, pupils are not securely aware as to how to improve their work or what standards they could achieve (targets). Similarly, parents are not made sufficiently aware of these targets nor involved sufficiently in helping their children's learning at home. When this happens the benefits are great. A pupil said, 'I feel great when I've done my homework properly and Mum says 'well done!'.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 66 lessons or parts of lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (5%)	27 (41%)	30 (45%)	4 (6%)	2 (3%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is good for pupils in the Foundation Stage. For pupils in Years 1 to 6 it is appropriate at this stage in the school's improvement and development but needs greater balance and breadth in readiness for the next stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for English is very good.
- The curriculum is delivered in ways that ensures that all pupils can benefit.
- The curriculum is insufficiently broad, balanced and enriched.

Commentary

18. The curriculum is good at the Foundation Stage but barely satisfactory for Years 1 to 6; it only just meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education because planning for such subjects as history is not fully in place. Currently, it is heavily weighted towards English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education as the first stage in the school's strategy for improvement. Rightly, the curriculum for English is very good, innovative and highly developed because this was a first priority. Taking this strategic planning into account, the curriculum overall is well planned with a half-termly framework and a clear overview. This ensures that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed in all subjects but not, as yet, systematically enough in subjects that do not have current priority for example, history. Senior management has well-considered plans to improve balance and breadth in the curriculum once the literacy and numeracy of pupils has improved and, correctly, recognise how necessary this is. There are very good links between literacy and subjects such as art and design, and design and technology; these provide good pointers to the benefits that greater coherence will bring, and in these cases, already brings.
19. The curriculum is highly inclusive. All pupils can benefit to the full because learning support is so coherent and comprehensive. The strategy to group pupils by ability in literacy and numeracy is very successful. In a well-planned and managed partnership, provision for pupils with special educational learning needs, those who find it difficult to behave well, those who are learning English as an additional language and those who have simply fallen behind with their learning receive the support they need to learn and, consequently, access the curriculum and make good progress. Often within separate and discrete groups, they are equally well supported when they return to class. Links are being successfully rebuilt with local secondary schools to help pupils in Year 6 make a smooth and well-prepared transfer. More able pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a worthwhile opportunity to learn French at a local secondary school but further opportunities are needed for these able pupils.
20. Curriculum provision for personal, moral, social, health and citizenship development is satisfactory but has yet to provide the strong and coherent foundation the overall curriculum needs. The curriculum for personal, social and health education has sensibly focused upon enabling pupils to make good relationships but, as yet, lacks the breadth and richness required in other areas of the subject such as health, safety and wider citizenship. To balance this, assemblies of very high quality inspire and enrich the pupils' awareness of the meaning, purpose and responsibilities of life. They reflect and celebrate the cultural and faith diversity of the pupils.
21. The curriculum and, therefore, pupils benefit from an excellent range of community projects and partnerships. 'MaTCH' (a collaborative numeracy project with Kings College, 'rml' (an intensive programme to support literacy) and science projects are funded through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and charity money; they make a major contribution to the pupils' learning. A resident artist shares her expertise and there are plans to work with the recently developed, neighbourhood arts centre. All pupils have the opportunity to be part of the very successful school choir and orchestra that perform locally. Residential visits, a good range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school add further valuable breadth to the curriculum. The school provides Easter schools and Saturday schools and these improve access to successful learning. Pupils take part in a small but insufficient range of competitive sports activities outside school. Overall, the range and variety of activities outside lessons, for example clubs, are too narrow and do not take enough advantage of opportunities within the local community. While this weakness is understandable at this stage in the school's development, senior management are rightly planning necessary improvement through, for example, the 'extended school'

initiative. There are already initiatives to support the learning of parents and these will pay dividends in helping their children to learn.

22. There are sufficient qualified teachers and teaching assistants to support the requirements of the curriculum. Very skilled staff development and deployment makes full and productive use of their talents; they have and are rapidly building their staff expertise and effectiveness. The very good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants makes a major contribution to pupils' learning, allowing them full access to the learning.
23. The accommodation provides a stimulating, exciting and efficient place in which to teach and learn. It has improved dramatically over the last year through decoration, refurbishment and good use of rooms for small group work. Community partners have made a considerable contribution to these improvements.
24. Resources for learning are sufficient, accessible and are of good quality and range. Even so, the library offers an important and necessary area for development and there are not enough computers.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Pupils receive good support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff take very good care of pupils.
- Pupils receive good personal and academic support and guidance.
- Pupils enjoy good and trusting relationships with adults.

Commentary

25. All staff clearly and continually care for the pupils in their charge. They demonstrate this in all their everyday activities through the concerned manner in which they relate to each pupil. Health and safety arrangements are good. There are trained first-aiders on every floor. Child protection procedures are in accordance with local practice and are clearly understood and properly applied by staff, all of whom receive appropriate training.
26. Academic and personal support and guidance are based on good assessment practices and a close knowledge of each pupil. Individual annual progress reports contain some National Curriculum target levels. The Learning Support Unit and a learning mentor provide good additional support and guidance for those with behavioural problems and for under-achievers. Pupils have a trusting relationship with adults; this is especially true for those under seven years old. Induction arrangements for new pupils are satisfactory, including for pupils who join the school as refugees or immigrants.
27. The school seeks to give pupils some influence through a school council, which operates for pupils in Years 3 to 6. This is less than one year old and is still developing, pupils' influence being limited to relatively minor areas of school life. Even so, the pupils value this opportunity and the election process involved teaches them some important aspects of citizenship. The school issued the pre-inspection questionnaire to pupils and has taken careful note of the, predominantly positive, response.
28. Since the last inspection, academic support has improved significantly and is now good. Care and welfare of pupils were satisfactory; they are now very good. The number of first-aiders has increased six-fold and all staff are now trained in child protection issues.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. There are very strong and valuable links with community institutions. The school enjoys very productive links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with other schools and colleges provide very good support for learning.
- Partnerships with external institutions are extremely strong and valuable.
- The school provides good general information to parents.
- There is insufficient dialogue and involvement with parents and the local community.
- Too many parents do not actively support their children's learning or the work of the school.
- Many parents make little effort to get children to school, and on time.

Commentary

29. The school provides good quality and regular information to parents about school activities. The revised school prospectus will give required information in an easily readable form. Parents are invited to consultation days about curriculum topics but too few attend. Annual reports on pupils' progress are comprehensive in recording what pupils can do. They record levels of attainment in core subjects and many contain satisfactory explanations of weaknesses. Most do not, however, contain helpful comment on how to improve and, while a projected National Curriculum level target is quoted, almost no reports contain specific individual improvement targets.
30. The apparent lack of interest shown in the school by too many parents makes communication difficult and better strategies are needed to solicit parents' views, develop their involvement in pupils' learning and increase their efforts to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Currently, there are no parent helpers in school, little shared reading at home and attendance at meetings or consultation days is poor.
31. There is a Parent-Teacher Association but it operates with a very small core of helpers and is not as effective as it would like to be. Overall, the links with parents do not make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning, at school or at home.
32. There was a good return of pre-inspection questionnaires and good attendance at the pre-inspection meetings. In these, parents expressed largely positive views of the school, particularly with regard to pupils' liking of school, quality of teaching, progress pupils make, high staff expectations, induction arrangements, homework arrangements, leadership and management, approachability and information on progress. A significant minority showed concern only regarding harassing behaviour. Inspectors agreed with most of these positive views though they felt that homework arrangements were only patchily successful and reports did not give sufficient help to improve performance. Inspectors did not find evidence that harassment was common.
33. The school's links with local businesses and other community agencies is a real success story. Several companies have contributed money, expertise and people to enhance the school's education provision, appearance and pupils' welfare, while many grants have been procured and used to good effect, for example a new ICT suite and in curriculum development for Years 1 and 2. Community institutions such as the local church and housing association support the school by providing resources for the curriculum and improving the school environment. The school's links with local people as individuals are, as yet, underdeveloped, although its recently acquired extended school status should enable it to become an integral part of the Old Ford 'village' community.
34. Links with other schools and colleges are very strong. Transfer arrangements for pupils going to secondary schools are satisfactory. There are very good curricular links with a local boys' school, where gifted and talented pupils receive French lessons and with a girls' performing arts school, where Old Ford has been invited to participate in a musical production. A particularly noteworthy link has been forged with King's College which is having a major impact on the teaching of mathematics.

35. Since the last inspection, there has been little improvement in the partnership with parents. There are still no helpers in school, little shared reading and too few attempts to reach out to parents. Reports still contain few targets and little guidance. Parents still make a limited contribution to learning. Nonetheless, parents now have fewer areas of concern than before which indicates that some of the school's recent significant internal improvements have filtered through to some parents. This provides a better foundation to build upon than in the past.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the headteacher is excellent, and leadership and management overall are very good. Governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for staff and pupils.
- The school is very effective at recruiting key staff and using them very effectively.
- Staff development is extremely effective.
- Finance and resource management are very good.
- Clear and focused strategy for improvement is managed very well and effectively implemented.

Commentary

Example of outstanding practice

Leadership and management provide a blueprint as to how to make a weak school a good one, very rapidly and despite many daunting challenges. The headteacher of just a year had faced a school with very low standards in almost every aspect of provision. She immediately set down exactly what good learning, teaching, leadership and management looked like, often using external quality frameworks as benchmarks. Quickly evaluating teaching and learning, she asked teachers for their views. She asked them how to improve achievement. Firm but highly effective performance management and support was immediately available when teachers talked about how to improve learning. Using her extensive network she attracted key top practitioners to act as interim managers and leaders, often on a part-time basis. They lead, manage, model teaching and teach themselves and give training; together they bring considerable expertise and powerful staff development. Together, managers built a simple but very detailed strategy for improvement. This strategy was carefully staged but periods between stages were short. This drives exciting urgency, described by some as 'the relentless pursuit of excellence'. Knowing that this strategy would be expensive, she actively sought additional funding, resources and specialised expertise. This increased the school's financial and other resources by almost a fifth. Working closely with higher education and business partners, she ensured problems did not remain problems but got 'sorted'. The school now has a passion for excellence and a vision of excellence that centres on the needs of all pupils. Staff morale is very high and pupils are proud of their school. There is a very strong partnership with outside agencies who talk of Old Ford as 'my school'. As one partner said, 'the school is surging ahead - right in front of your eyes!'

36. This is a school that has rapidly moved from having serious weaknesses to become a good school that is well on its way to becoming a very good school. This has mainly happened within the last year and is due to the excellent and highly expert leadership of the headteacher. There are excellent procedures for staff development and clear internal and external standards to work towards, and against which to evaluate provision, learning, teaching, leadership and management; these quality standards underpin improvement. These processes are backed by key and top practitioners recruited to help implement a simple, yet detailed strategy for improvement. This has created and nurtures a very determined and committed staff, hungry for success. Staff in their various roles are, or are becoming, highly effective leaders and managers, secure in their belief that no problem is insoluble.
37. The headteacher saw the stigma of being judged as a 'serious weakness' school as a severe hindrance to improvement because it lowered morale, made recruitment and retention difficult and confirmed the views of critical parents. The pupils felt they went to a bad school and acted accordingly. Her planning was, and is, highly focused upon removing this perceived stigma and although bringing urgency, this perception has led to some imbalance in planning and subsequently provision, for example within the curriculum. Governors and staff realise that the time has come to put the past behind them, and plan completely for the future.

38. The governing body has been considerably strengthened by the expertise and determination of business partners from the world of banking. These new governors have brought not only expertise, but also a bite, bluntness and determination that will accept nothing but top service from suppliers and the best provision for pupils. They talk of 'our school'. The governing body has been strengthened by new and keen parent governors. The governors now work through an effective schedule of full governing body and committee meetings, and there is a strong and open partnership with staff. The governing body as a whole is evolving, and governors as a whole are beginning to develop the rigour necessary in the governance of this school.
39. Leadership has built a very strong and coherent partnership with many partners, and underpinning the school's improvement is the positive partnership with the local education authority, higher education, businesses, charitable bodies and local schools.
40. Examples of the very good and excellent leadership and management are many, but above all include: the highly successful provision for English and literacy, and the very good leadership and management of provision for pupils with particular barriers to learning to overcome. The latter provision is completely coherent both across its various forms and also with mainstream provision in lessons. This includes provision for learning and behaviour, learning English as an additional language and helping pupils who have fallen behind with their learning.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2757424	Balance from previous year	18000
Total expenditure	2745480	Balance carried forward to the next	11944
Expenditure per pupil	4379		

41. The school manages its finances extremely well, ensuring that the school receives everything it is due and attracting considerable additional resources. These moves have made almost one fifth more resources available for each pupil, in addition to the above figures. The headteacher inherited a private funding initiative (PFI) for the maintenance and development of the buildings. The school considered that this scheme did not offer value for money, wasted considerable management time that should have been focused on improving provision for pupils and provided a poor service. The skilled management of the headteacher supported by the expertise and 'blunt' determination of a business governor has created a strong partnership of local education authority contract holders, private contractors and the school as client that is determined to put things right and is well on the way to doing so. In this school, people know and understand the principles for gaining best value and apply them with rigour.
42. The school offers satisfactory value for money and once attainment is higher is well placed to offer good value for money.

Provision for and achievement of pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic cultures

43. Provision for pupils from minority ethnic cultures is very good, as is provision for pupils learning English as an additional language. Most of these pupils achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A highly effective and coherent full school policy fully integrated with other policies.
- Skilled management of very complex yet coherent provision.
- Engagement with local cultural communities is insufficient.

- The charismatic leadership of the teachers responsible for ethnic minority achievement and race equality.
- The level of and highly effective training for staff.

Commentary

44. This school serves a very diverse community with many languages and cultures. A small but significant number of pupils are recent refugee or immigrants, mainly from Europe. The school sees 'White/British' to be an ethnic minority. They do this because this group has been identified as the lowest achievers and this problem seems to have cultural roots, strongly linked to negative attitudes of some parents.
45. In this school inclusivity is neither simply theoretical nor piously ethical; it is a practical and realistic commitment backed by determination. With close cooperation between school managers, consultants, and local education authority agencies, the school attacks a multi-faceted problem with multi-faceted provision. The many sides of provision are extremely well managed and empowered by very strong leadership. Pupils are treated as individuals who may have many overlapping problems and barriers to learning to overcome. This may involve a carefully considered pastoral support plan, individual education plans or individual behaviour plans, often in combination.
46. Pupils feel their individual cultures are recognised, celebrated and valued, although a few parents feel that the White/British minority and pupils of mixed race are least valued, although this inspection finds that this is not the case. Relationships between pupils of different cultures are very good, as seen in an informal music concert. Bangladeshi pupils told inspectors how valued they feel. Recognising, however, that relationships alone are not enough, the school has ensured that all teachers and teaching assistants are trained in the skills and understandings required to support pupils learning English as a new language or from a culture other than White/British. This is benefiting all pupils including White/British. In the lower years, many of the teaching assistants are bi-lingual and they are deployed to best effect.
47. Assessment data is analysed in great detail, not only to track and evaluate pupils' progress but also to identify where and how provision needs to improve. The manager responsible for race equality leads by example and checks carefully, working closely with the very committed manager responsible for the provision for pupils learning English. Currently, the rate and level of English acquisition has only been measured once, and the school has yet to gain a picture of progress over time. On the evidence of this inspection, however, pupils very quickly gain enough skills in English to learn alongside their English speaking peers, especially in the nursery and reception classes. The only pupils in upper years that still have problems are late entrants and those with special educational needs. These are picked up immediately by the ethnic minority achievement manager and staff told of their needs and advised how to meet them.
48. Pupils from different cultures achieve as well as their White/British peers and Asian pupils in particular are very well represented in higher attaining groups. The lowest achievers tend to be White/British. These latter pupils feel valued and are gaining in self-esteem and commitment to success. They, however, tend to need continual success if their motivation is not to drop. This is being addressed by very effective provision to help them catch up with their learning.
49. Elsewhere in this report, partnership with parents and with local communities is identified as an area for improvement. As yet, this aspect of provision for pupils of different cultures is not well developed, although the school has made a good start, for example discussions over Ramadan with local religious leaders.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The school has made good improvements from the previous inspection. The leadership and management is good, and the majority of children achieve well now as a result of good teaching. The curriculum in the outdoor areas for nursery and reception classes is very well developed and enriches children's experiences.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is usually good or very good and, consequently children achieve well.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and very appropriate for children of this age.

Commentary

50. Overall, the attainment of children joining the nursery and reception classes is very low in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world and is below average in personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development.
51. Approximately 60 per cent of the children join the school with no English. Many children join reception classes with no early-years school experience. The two intakes in a year result in younger children having only two terms in reception classes. Despite the good teaching, the attainment of over a third of the children in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world still remains well below expectations when they join Year 1.
52. Most children achieve well and their attainment in physical development, creative development, and personal, social and emotional is in line with expectations. The staff have high expectations and more able children attain standards above expected levels. Average ability children's attainment is in line with expected standards.
53. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced and gives children a good start to their education. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all the areas of learning. A very good feature of teaching is that all staff model language very well. They ask children to repeat language and require them to answer in full sentences and simple nods or one-word answers are not accepted. This helps all children to progress well, particularly those who have English as an additional language. Many teaching assistants are bilingual and support children well by using their mother tongue. Children who have special educational needs are well supported and they achieve well. Children from ethnic minorities achieve as well as their peers. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
54. The Foundation Stage manager and the reception leader both provide good leadership and manage the nursery and reception units well. Assessment procedures are good but are not yet used well to track individual progress. Parents are given opportunities to visit the school before their children start school but these visits are insufficient for them to get a good grasp of the curriculum taught. The accommodation is good and outdoor areas for reception and nursery children enrich and extend the curriculum. The resources are very well used to provide stimulating activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are good; children have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy being in school.
- Children achieve well and attainment is as expected.

Commentary

55. Children settle down quickly into school routines. The quality of the curriculum and the staff's good knowledge of the needs of young children ensure success in developing the children's interest in their activities and their ability to sustain concentration. Children are learning to share resources, take turns and respect each other and play together as was seen in all outdoor and indoor activities.
56. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and the approach to behaviour management is positive. Most children are attentive and eager to learn, and find it easy to conform to the appropriate standards of behaviour set by the staff. Children of different backgrounds work and play in harmony. Children are appropriately active sometimes and at other times sit and concentrate as was seen in literacy and numeracy lessons in both nursery and reception classes. Children's attainment is as expected by the time they join Year 1.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching of reading and writing skills is good and most children achieve well.
- Staff provide very good role-models of language, and opportunities for children to speak are very good.

Commentary

57. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and most children achieve well. Staff explain vocabulary well using body actions and props, for example when reading 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' story, and very good modelling of language and explanations of vocabulary help children to develop their speaking and listening skills.
58. Teachers put great emphasis on teaching the sounds of letters (phonics) and how to recognise words, and most children know some letter names and their sounds. More able children can link these sounds to create whole words and can read simple text. However, a significant minority are still learning letter sounds and many average-ability children cannot yet read common words. The reading skills of a significant minority of children who have English as an additional language are still low.
59. Children practise their writing skills and most can write their names unaided. Specific skills, such as using knowledge of letter sounds to read, and analysing the picture clues in stories, are taught well. Children are praised for their successes and teaching picks up on their responses well to take learning forward. Children write and make their own books about various stories and are beginning to write simple sentences using their phonic skills. However, a significant minority just write strings of letters, and their language for thinking and communication is still under-developed. Overall, children's attainment is well below the expected levels by the time they join Year 1.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is good and most children achieve well.
- Practical activities support children's mathematical development well.

Commentary

60. The quality of teaching and learning is good and children make good progress from the very low level on entry. They achieve well, but attainment remains well below expected levels when they enter Year 1.
61. Most children can count to 10 but many cannot yet recognise numbers. Teachers match work to children's needs well and have high expectations. As a result, more able children attain standards that are above expectations, they are secure with numbers to 20 and are able to solve simple problems involving the use of vocabulary of 'one more than' and 'one less than'. They can add and subtract numbers to 10 and can record accurately. Most can name simple two-dimensional shapes, recognise some coins and can sort large and small objects.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use of resources supports learning well.
- Children receive sufficient opportunities to select tools, and use techniques and resources to develop designing and making.

Commentary

62. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good and children's achievement is good. They learn about a variety of materials, and are able to select tools and techniques when they make models using recyclable materials or construction toys. Very good use of materials, such as books, models of egg, caterpillar and a butterfly and a live caterpillar in a cocoon developed children's understanding of growth. The role-play opportunities in relation to their topic on 'Journeys' were very good, as when children dressed as pirates, packed suitcases, bought tickets and rowed their boats to distant lands. The teacher took this opportunity to enrich their vocabulary by asking them to go 'under,' 'over' and 'through' various imagined hurdles.
63. Teachers support children's learning in ICT very well and as a result they are gaining confidence and give commands to the Pixie dressed as a monster to move forward and backward and make a right hand and left hand turn. Attainment of average ability children is in line with expectations and more able children attain above the expected standards. However, a significant minority attain standards that are well below expected levels by the time they join Year 1.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have access to a good range of tools to improve hand and eye co-ordination.
- Teaching is good and children learn to move with control and confidence.

Commentary

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and children's achievement is good. The staff allow children to be adventurous in climbing and in balancing on and jumping off equipment, without jeopardising safety or reducing challenge. They are taught well to use space appropriately when they go on a 'Bear hunt'. Reception children use the hall to develop their game skills. Consequently children are confident in controlling their movements.
65. Children have access to a good range of tools, different sized paintbrushes, pencils, felt tips, a computer mouse, scissors and jigsaw puzzles. They hold a pencil correctly when they write and use scissors well to cut in straight lines. Children's attainment is in line with expectations when they join Year 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teaching about the ways in which a range of materials can be used and children achieve well.

Commentary

66. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and children achieve well. Children are introduced to a range of media for example painting, song, dance and role-play. They learn to sing simple songs in numeracy and literacy lessons. Nursery and reception children join in singing in assemblies and achieve well. Lessons with the music specialist further improve their composing and singing skills. Children draw, paint and make collages creatively and with reflection. They observe famous artists' work and paint in the style of Matisse, O'Keefe and Gauguin. Children who speak English as an additional language show good ability in using tools and making pictures. They experiment with paint and use their observations to create attractive and interesting results.
67. Children play collaboratively in the role-play area and are well supported by staff. By the time children join Year 1 their standards are as expected for their age.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching now results in highly positive attitudes towards English and pupils are beginning to achieve well in the subject.
- Teachers' insistence on pupils using well structured English when they are speaking in all subjects provides excellent opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills.
- The leadership and management of English are very good.
- Teachers and other staff use good resources very effectively to match different types of language work to pupils' individual abilities.
- The very good teaching has not been in place long enough, so attainment is still well below average.
- Successful interventions used alongside the national literacy strategy are helping very low-attaining pupils to achieve well.
- Assessment of pupils' standards is now used very well to group them accurately, but the marking and target-setting aspects of assessment require development.

Commentary

68. The school's provision for English has improved very significantly since the last inspection because the quality of teaching is very much better.
69. Pupils' language skills on entry are extremely low, but the very good teaching they experience now promotes highly positive attitudes, which pupils of all abilities display. A very good level of resources, including well-trained support staff, is now available for English. The school deploys these resources very effectively to provide pupils with work which is excellently matched to their individual requirements. This provision is very complex and involves, for example, pupils in a Year 2 class moving briskly and very confidently from group to group, room to room, for different elements of a lesson. This may involve a lower phonics group followed by a higher-level handwriting group. Staff make these decisions based on pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses, and groups change flexibly when teachers or other adults identify enough progress. Plenary work with the whole-class enables all pupils, including lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, to feel centrally involved, and teaching assistants help these pupils contribute well in larger groups.
70. A successful intervention programme that complements the national literacy strategy has been in operation this year. Very good training for teaching and support staff has provided them with high levels of competence in teaching lower-attaining pupils through this scheme. Again, the teaching of this is finely targeted to pupils' individual competences, so pupils of different ages sometimes study together.
71. None of these resources, methods or schemes has been in place long enough to have raised pupils' attainment to better than well below average overall at the age of seven, or at eleven. These standards broadly reflect previous years' national test results. However, pupils' achievements in lessons and across time are now often very good and most are now learning very well.
72. This very good learning is supported in lessons other than English because teachers use every opportunity to promote language skills very effectively. This is particularly impressive in speaking and listening, where teachers model spoken language well in all subjects. They then frequently require pupils to chorus sentences aloud, then voice them independently, for instance as questions, to their

'talk-partners'. There is therefore, an excellent level of opportunity for both speaking and listening in lessons across the curriculum, particularly when pupils are younger and need this most.

73. Older pupils in the school have not had the benefit of recent improvements for long, but are also now achieving well. Attainment amongst higher-attaining pupils broadly matches the expectations for their ages, but there is little above average attainment. Reading is better than writing, but improvement in writing is starting to be evident. By Year 6, pupils are successfully studying 'transition' work to prepare them for secondary school. Comprehension of the novel 'The Suitcase Kid' ranges from average to well below average, but pupils were often better able to express ideas orally than in writing.
74. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards has become accurate, but only very recently. Assessment of this type is now used well to group pupils. The school recognises that the next steps require focus on better marking which gives pupils identifiable, understandable targets for immediate, short-term improvement. When pupils understand what they need to do to improve, their present very good attitudes can be harnessed to engage them in the already evident cycle of improvement.
75. The leadership and management of English are very good. Recognition that the subject is crucial to pupils' improvement across the range of the curriculum is paramount in all planning. All elements are now in place to lead to much better standards in the subject in years to come.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. Very low levels of literacy on intake have had profoundly detrimental effects on pupils' achievement across the whole curriculum for many years. Only very recently has the school begun to overcome these obstacles. The very good and often excellent practice observed in teaching English, and in teachers using other subjects to promote English skills, is beginning to improve standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teachers' insistence on full-sentence responses in question and answer opportunities in all lessons is one very good example where oral/aural skills are consistently well reinforced. Teachers' own use of language is very good in modelling clarity of speech. It also exemplifies well the degree of formality required to speak properly in a school-based context.
77. The school's book stock for classroom use is good, but pupils have not had full opportunity to benefit from the use of the newly formed library. Pupils need to get used to the concept of books being a central resource to support learning in all subjects. This applies equally to ICT, as pupils are using neither library books nor computers sufficiently well for any purpose in their studies. This is of particular concern as many pupils come from households where few books are available to provide such support.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Planning and teaching are good.
- Teachers ask probing questions to check understanding.
- All pupils receive the support they need and achieve well.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is very good and leads to effective staff development.
- The school places great emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy skills.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- Occasionally pupils do not make sufficient progress when they are not sufficiently supported in their learning.

Commentary

78. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Years 6 and 2 in 2003 were well below national averages. Current attainment is below average, overall, as at the time of the last inspection but the climate and provision for learning are much improved.
79. Current standards in both Years 2 and 6 are below average. From very well below attainment on entry to the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of English language acquisition, achieve well throughout the school. Achievement in Year 6 is accelerating because of the very good quality of teaching and improved learning; classes that group pupils of similar attainment challenge all pupils more readily and appropriately. Support from Kings College with an innovative programme to increase achievement contributes very positively to the pupils' learning.
80. Teaching and learning were good in the majority of lessons seen. In Year 6 two very good lessons were seen. Strengths include:
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan challenging lessons with clear learning objectives.
 - Teachers place good emphases on the introduction to lessons and build pupils' understanding, using appropriate subject vocabulary.
 - The pace of lessons is usually brisk, while giving pupils sufficient time to complete set tasks.
 - Teachers use marking and assessment effectively to help pupils to improve their work.
 - Teaching assistants are well briefed and work effectively with pupils who have special educational needs or require language support.
81. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and this has influenced the good teaching and rapid improvement in pupils' achievement. The mathematics manager, headteacher, advisory teachers and lecturers from Kings College work effectively together to develop and raise standards and provision. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and assessment procedures are good; pupils have a clear knowledge of their levels of attainment. When insufficient progress is made, classroom learning and teaching are further scrutinised, leading to better or additional support for pupils. When teaching needs to improve, the subject leaders identify points for development and support, and further training given. This process has been of particular importance for the new and temporary teachers to the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Pupils often use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects, and as a result develop an appreciation of the practical application of these skills. For example, in science they measure, record and compare the results of investigations and in design and technology pupils draw designs carefully, using measurement to cut materials accurately for their models. There is widespread use of bar and other graphs to analyse and interpret data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy science because the teaching is very good.
- Pupils are interested because the practical work is fun and relevant to them.
- Too few pupils are gaining the highest levels in tests because some guidance is not sharp enough.

Commentary

83. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average. The pupils in Year 2 enjoy finding out how to grow better seedlings and make toy cars go faster. They learn very well because they use special words and take readings as real scientists would do. They draw graphs well but not yet with the help of computers. Individual pupils achieve very well from Year 1 to Year 2 because working in teams with very good supporting adults goes hand-in-hand with exciting things to do. The adults are very good role models. Sometimes pupils, who had previously not been able to shine, produced work as good as the best in the class. The pupils in Year 6 know that science ideas need to be presented clearly so their books are very neat showing that they are keen to do well. Also some know that, in science, data is needed to make a convincing case. From Year 3 to Year 6, pupils get excited and enthusiastic about science because they find out about things that matter to them like fizzy drinks and clean water. Overall they achieve very well. However, they are not using numbers, writing and computers enough to achieve the highest levels expected nationally.
84. Teaching and learning are, on balance, very good in both key stages. The teachers' excellent behaviour management encourages both enthusiasm and concentration. Because of this, pupils speak accurately and thoughtfully and gain confidence at their own pace. In one lesson, some pupils, however, finished earlier than expected and were not sure what to do next to improve. The pupils are fortunate to be taught by teachers who are very cheerful while also moving things along at a brisk pace so that pupils do work hard yet feel cared for. The teachers and supporting adults speak several languages and share a range of different cultural traditions as well as an enthusiasm for science and for learning. Consequently, individual support is very good. In about half of the lessons seen, the learning was good for the majority but all were expected to do the same activity when some could have done more challenging ones. Furthermore, the comments written on marked work are sometimes not sufficiently challenging to produce a quick response towards the highest standards.
85. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader and senior teachers are very good role models, have correctly identified areas for further improvement and have a very good awareness of national trends and changes. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. Improvement in the last year has been very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards from Year 1 to year 5 are in line with national expectations and are improving. The attainment of current Year 6 pupils is below national expectations.
- Teaching is good and pupils' achievement is good.
- Resources are only satisfactory.
- The co-ordinator's leadership and management are very good.
- ICT is used well in literacy and numeracy.

Commentary

86. Standards are in line with those expected nationally in Years 1 to 5 and are improving as a result of improved teaching. Standards of current Year 6 are below average, because there is a significant minority who are working below expected levels. Year 6 pupils have had insufficient time to reap the benefit of recent improvements. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs, those who are from ethnic minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language is good.
87. The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection. Standards in Years 1 to Year 5 have improved, and pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching is now good. Year 2 pupils competently word process, mix text and graphics, and are learning to record a sequence of instructions to control the 'roamer'. They meet appropriate challenges and their achievement is good.
88. The computer suite is used well. However, the suite is small and insufficient numbers of computers leads to some pupils having to wait for their turn and this slows the pace of the lesson and hinders learning.
89. The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' previous learning and build on it effectively. The interactive whiteboard is used well in the computer suite to aid whole-class demonstrations. Teaching assistants are used well to support learning. Teachers have high expectations and are secure with using the computers and as a result guide pupils well. Pupils experience the expected range of opportunities to develop their ICT skills in word-processing, graphics, using e-mail, the Internet, data-handling, control and modelling.
90. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is regular monitoring of teachers' planning, teaching and pupils' learning. All teachers have had training in ICT and those less confident are supported well. Assessment procedures are good but have not been established long enough to use the information for future planning and tracking progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology skills in literacy and numeracy and satisfactory use in other curriculum areas. Pupils use their word-processing skills across many subjects. The Internet is used for research in all subjects. Pupils use their literacy skills and mix text and graphics. They use computers in mathematics to improve learning in number, shape and data handling. ICT skills in science, art and design and design and technology are beginning to develop.

HUMANITIES

92. History and geography were sampled. There was insufficient evidence to make the full range of judgements.

Geography

The provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the interactions between all adults and the pupils is very good and therefore pupils gain confidence quickly.
- Some activities are not challenging enough and the quantity of work done is too limited. Consequently, individual achievement is adversely affected in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

93. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are average. Year 2 pupils can successfully use local maps to plan routes between home and school. They know about the points of the compass and the names of some countries across the world. They are less confident when comparing the physical and human features of a locality because they do not do enough of this kind of work. Year 6 pupils enjoyed using maps outside. Photographs suggest they were doing work at the appropriate level. No other work was available. Although achievement overall is satisfactory, the work seen suggests that achievement is more consistently good in Years 1 and 2.
94. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2. However, teaching and learning, based on the work seen, appear to be good. The work is well presented and pupils have used local maps very accurately. They achieve well. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are mostly satisfactory and have both good and very good features. Good attitudes to field work have developed because the teachers planned very well. A very good feature was the high quality of the relationship between the teacher and the pupils. This interaction helped everyone to talk very effectively and in depth about their views upon the importance to society and to the environment of good individual habits and a supply of clean water. Some of the best contributions came from pupils who had only recently become confident, for a variety of reasons, in their own capacity to learn. However, marking is not sharp enough so really good work was hard to find. Furthermore the quantity of work seen in Year 6 was too small.
95. Leadership is good and includes regularly monitoring of the standard of pupils' work in books. The subject leader has a very clear picture of what needs to be done. There is a gap, however, between what is planned and what is actually happening for example, in Year 6. Nevertheless good features of the current curriculum indicate that management by the subject leader is at least satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too little work is being done in history because the new scheme of work is currently not yet implemented.
- Gaps in the sequence of learning prevent pupils from achieving well.
- Topics covered are celebrated with good quality displays of pupils' work.

Commentary

96. No teaching was observed and, therefore, judgements are based upon planning and pupils' previous work. On this evidence, standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. Year 1 pupils compare modern toys with old ones but too little work has been done. The current Year 6 curriculum does not include a history topic. From the work seen, it seems likely that teaching and learning are good in Years 3, 4 and 5. The displays of pupils' work are attractive and three-dimensional and show good understanding of time-lines and a good feeling for the past, for example the pupils' written versions of how different key people might have viewed the invasion of Britain by the Romans. They write imaginatively about what it was like to be a child chimney sweep in Victorian England. This good approach to the subject provides a taste of the good things to come, seen in the current displays of the contributions made by different cultural groups to the development of British society over time. An especially good activity on display is a comparison between the 2004 Greek Olympic stadium and stadiums of Ancient Greece.
97. The new subject leader has good vision but systems such as marking procedures and ways to involve pupils in using a range of sources of information have yet to be planned and implemented. Management therefore is not yet satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** with some good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers support learning about religion, with insights that enrich the pupils' own lives.
- The subject is well planned and has a high profile.

Commentary

98. Teaching could only be observed in Year 1 but there was much other evidence of pupils' learning in Years 1 to 6. Work in books and as a part of very good displays shows that pupils study an appropriate range of topics in depth, showing broadly average and sometimes above average attainment that meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
99. Displays and books show insightful and reflective work on a range of religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. Photographs and work show that pupils visit places of worship, including interesting work with a local Christian minister, and that festivals such as Divali and Eid are not simply studied but celebrated, for example, through assemblies. Elements in assemblies seen during the inspection showed pupils being not only taught different faith approaches to common human dilemmas but also given opportunity to reflect quietly on what these beliefs might mean in their own lives.
100. Displays in corridors give the subject a high profile, celebrating the good quality reflective writing of the pupils and celebrating the place of the various religions in pupils' lives, for example a very good display on the five pillars of Islam. Learning has a practical and useful side as in making lamps for Divali. This strong impression was borne out in the little teaching that could be seen; the teaching observed was good or very good. One lesson in particular was very carefully planned with clear and appropriate objectives. It dealt with Jews finding that a lamp in the Temple did not run out of oil but continued to give light in the darkness. By using her good teaching skills in telling the story and using a candelabra that was lit one candle at a time, the teacher with the teaching assistant was able to help the pupils to enter into and experience the story, feeling what it was like to be there so long ago. They could understand how Jews believed that their God had entered into their lives; their concentrated engagement was almost tangible.
101. The leadership and management of the subject are good and are carried by the headteacher. She has ensured that the subject has a proper place within the curriculum, is based upon a helpful scheme of work and that teachers have the support and training they need. Very good use is made of high quality resources from a local resource centre. The weaknesses found at the last inspection have been addressed and rectified. Provision is now satisfactory and in some aspects good. Pupils are learning well and with genuine interest and thought.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and professional artists enrich and extend the pupils' learning.
- Good resources help pupils achieve well.
- The teachers' careful planning and effective teaching raises pupils' achievement.
- Management does not bring the strengths in the provision together enough.

Commentary

102. Three lessons were observed in Years 2 and 6. Teaching and learning were usually good. Even so, from this and other evidence it is clear that pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard and this is helping them to achieve even higher standards. There are many displays of pupils' work that celebrate their success and show that pupils use a wide range of materials confidently and creatively. This is because teachers help them to plan and evaluate their own work; consequently, pupils see ways to improve. Displays as a whole give pupils an example of excellence to aim for. A good feature in teaching is the way teachers encourage pupils to help others by carefully considered and constructive comment.
103. The expertise and enthusiasm of professional artists significantly enrich the pupils' learning. Amongst other initiatives this partnership is producing new gates for the school that are of very high artistic merit. Another example is a beautiful felt tapestry, created by pupils led by two artists funded by the Worshipful Company of Mercers.
104. Teaching overall is good but less successful when insufficiently planned and prepared. A strong feature of the good teaching is the way teachers and teaching assistants work as a team. The attainment of most pupils is average with examples of above average work.
105. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory although improving as the next steps are put in place. This leadership recognises that the many exciting initiatives need drawing together within a better planned curriculum, especially since one of the secondary schools to which the pupils progress is a performing arts specialist college.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well planned curriculum allows for the steady learning of skills and knowledge.
- Good training and support for teachers has raised standards considerably.

Commentary

106. Although only two lessons were observed, wider evidence suggests that attainment is average in Years 2 and 6, and that pupils benefit from good teaching. For example: displays of pupils' work show that they understand the processes of design, re-think, make and evaluate, and also show them the even higher standards they can achieve. Teaching is well planned and leads to good learning. For example: in a Year 1 lesson, good teaching ensured that pupils enjoyed studying the properties of fruit and vegetables, before making a well planned and healthy fruit salad. The teacher sang to the pupils, reminding them

what they had achieved during this lesson and when they sang the song it not only embedded their learning but also celebrated their achievement and fun in learning.

107. These strengths show that there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. At that time there were weaknesses. There is now a structured approach to the teaching of design skills and this supports steady progress and improving achievement. Clear and effective management ensures that this improvement will continue and strong leadership is driving up standards through very well planned staff development opportunities for staff.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject manager has a high level of expertise and a clear vision of the value of music within a balanced education.
- Teaching inspires pupils who, consequently, are keen to perform.

Commentary

108. Even though only a small sample of lessons was observed, watching pupils perform at other times and wider evidence provided by the subject leader suggests that provision is very good and pupils' attainment is above average in Years 2 and 6. For example: pupils in a Year 3 lesson created their own short but well composed pieces of music on tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments, expressing imaginatively their feelings after listening to water flow. They grasped the texture of the sound they were to build into their music.

109. Pupils can learn to play brass instruments but there is too little opportunity to learn other instruments. There is a good range of well-attended opportunities to rehearse and perform, for instance a school orchestra, choir and percussion band. Pupils enjoy the chance to perform. Their clear musicality and strong ability to engage and excite an audience is a joy to see, as in an impromptu concert in involving older pupils in the choir and orchestra. Their attainment and musicality were above average; they were able to use dynamics and phrasing guided by notation to perform with engaging enjoyment and to project the music to the audience, creating a sense of performance. There are further opportunities for pupils to take part in concerts at school and in the local community. All Year 5 pupils took part in concerts with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall.

110. The very good and expert subject leader is responsible for taking all music lessons, although staff are encouraged to develop musical activities in the classroom. Effective staff development is building staff confidence and expertise so that can they achieve this. Management recognises that music could play a more central part within a more balanced overall curriculum.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is good.
- Teaching and learning is good in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' have good attitudes and their behaviour is good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' skills are underdeveloped.
- There are no extra-curricular activities or clubs run by the school.

Commentary

111. Current standards by the end of Year 2 and 6 are just below national expectations and are likely to be in line with national expectations in swimming by the end of Year 6. Standards have not been maintained since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with national expectations in both Key Stages 1 and 2.

112. The quality of teaching and learning varies, but is good overall in Years 3 to 6, and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in their learning and in the development of their skills as a result of good planning and teaching. All lessons begin with appropriate warm-up activities, followed by an explanation of the objectives so pupils know what is expected of them. Clear explanation and careful demonstrations are followed by well-focused practice. The impact of this was that pupils improved their skills throughout the lesson.

113. The subject is very well led and currently satisfactorily managed by a well qualified manager. He has only been in post since September, however, and has had few opportunities to monitor planning and teaching as yet. He has clear ideas as to where provision requires improvement and how this be achieved. Procedures for assessing pupils' skills are under-developed and this means that teachers do not fully meet the needs of individual pupils in lessons. There are no extra-curricular activities or clubs after school and this misses opportunities for pupils to achieve and grow in self-confidence. Overall, the school's accommodation and learning resources support teaching and learning well. Three good-sized halls and three playgrounds provide pupils with ample room to work and practise skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social, health and citizenship education

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current provision has underpinned the improvements in relationships and the pupils' attitudes towards each other and their learning.
- The current provision lacks the depth and detail that is now required.

Commentary

114. The school decided that in the first year of improvement PSHE should focus on building the pupils' ability to relate to others. The curriculum was, therefore, weighted towards these priorities. This has been a very successful strategy. The time has now come, however, to design a curriculum that covers more topics and that builds pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding progressively as they move up the school. The school plans to do this from September but these plans are not well advanced.

115. Although little teaching could be observed, and this was at Key Stage 1, work in books shows that the subject plays an important part in all pupils' learning. This is borne out by good displays around the

school. The quality of work in books showed average maturity when considering challenging aspects of relationships.

116. The teaching seen was good. It was well planned and delivered with great enthusiasm yet seriousness. The pupils were highly involved, playing their part to the full. The contribution of the teaching assistant was important. Even so, the lesson was at the end of the day when the pupils were tired. Looking at other timetables, this is usually the case. This practice needs review since the school places a very high emphasis upon the subject.
117. The pupils' learning is enhanced and enriched by working within an orderly, caring and purposeful community. This includes clear expectations and codes for behaviour and inspiring assemblies. This enrichment and extension into practical activities is important because the pupils clearly learned by seeing the positive results of what they learn in PSHE. Currently, the higher level skills usually associated with teaching in this area of learning are not well developed and use is patchy. For example, few teachers use such techniques as 'circle time' (times when pupils can share and discuss concerns). The school has plans to develop these skills.
118. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have resulted in improvement since the last inspection. However, currently they are not strong enough to meet the needs of the high priority placed upon this aspect of learning by the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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