

INSPECTION REPORT

**HERNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AIDED
JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Herne, Herne Bay, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118736

Headteacher: Mr. R. Bevis

Reporting inspector: Mr. Adrian Everix
23079

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th March 2000

Inspection number: 183132

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. A. Dilnot
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

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			The school's results and achievements
			Teaching and learning
Susan Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well the school works in partnership with parents.
David Major	Team inspector	Science	How well the school is led and managed.
		Design and technology	
David Mylorie	Team inspector	Art	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.
		Geography	
		History	
		Equal opportunities	
		Special educational needs	
Robina Scahill	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well the school cares for its pupils.
		Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Herne Junior School caters for pupils between the ages of 7 and 11. At the time of the inspection 361 pupils were on roll, a higher figure than similar schools nationally, of which 194 were boys and 167 girls. This is an increase of 37 pupils from the last inspection. Most pupils come from Herne, Herne Bay and surrounding villages. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, although the number of pupils claiming free school meals is below the national average and no pupils come from ethnic minority groups. Thirty per cent of pupils are on the special needs register of which 8 pupils (2.2%) have statements for their needs. Both these figures are above the national average and significantly higher than in the last inspection. The proportions of special needs pupils fluctuate in each year group. Where percentages have been higher, for example in 1999, this has influenced the number of pupils attaining expected levels in the National Curriculum Tests. Similarly, pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school varies but overall it is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that provides good value for money. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and standards in the majority of subjects are above average. Leadership reflects a shared commitment to school improvement.

What the school does well

- Overall, pupils are taught well and the quality of their learning is good.
- Effective systems for praising and rewarding pupils are reflected in their positive attitudes in school.
- Excellent links with the community, including local businesses, have significantly benefited pupils' learning.
- Pupils are taught right from wrong and to behave responsibly.
- The school is led effectively and there is a clear vision for the future based on improving the quality of education.
- Pupils achieve high standards in a range of musical activities.

What could be improved

- Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress and its use to plan work.
- A number of smaller issues which the school should address.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan sent to parents or carers of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Apart from teachers' marking, which requires further improvement, the key issues identified in the last inspection have been resolved. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils' good progress has been maintained in most subjects. The curriculum now offers greater breadth with improvements in information technology and multi cultural education. Good standards in pupils' attitudes and behaviour have continued to rise. Very good use of outside finance has been used to provide such facilities as a very well-equipped computer suite and a purpose built music room.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	D	C	C
mathematics	A	C	C	C
science	C	C	C	C

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

The table shows that the school's performance in 1999 was average when compared with all schools and with those which have a similar proportion of free school meals. The school's results in 1998 and 1999 were significantly affected by the large proportion of pupils then in Year 6 on the higher stages of the special needs register. These proportions are lower this year and this is reflected in the inspection judgements, which show that the number of current Year 6 pupils attaining national standards is above average in English, science and mathematics. Overall, pupils make good progress in these three "core" subjects. Attainment in information technology is similar to that expected nationally. Pupils are currently making good progress using the excellent facilities in the computer suite. In the lessons and activities observed in music pupils achieved high standards. Standards in art, history, geography and games skills in physical education are higher than those expected for the pupils' ages. Standards in other aspects of physical education and in design and technology are broadly those expected. The school has set challenging but achievable targets in its Year 2000 test results. In English it aims for eighty and in mathematics eighty five per cent of pupils to attain national standards or higher.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to their work and are enthusiastic about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good or better in nine out of every ten lessons. Pupils behave well during break-times and sensibly use the equipment provided for them.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to responsibilities. Relationships are very good, nearly all pupils show care and concern for each other.
Attendance	Average for authorised absence. Little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

Teaching was very good in 16%, good in 41%, satisfactory in 40% and unsatisfactory in 3% of lessons. The highest proportion of good and very good teaching was in Years 3 and 6. The quality of teaching observed in English was sound overall with good or better teaching in four out of every ten lessons. Overall, teaching in mathematics was good. Skills in numeracy and literacy are well taught across the curriculum. Strengths in teaching include teachers' knowledge of the curriculum which ensures that pupils learn the required skills and knowledge, and the management of pupils, which creates the right ethos for them to work hard. The school meets the needs of most of its pupils well. Learning assistants are deployed effectively to teach pupils with special educational needs. In a few lessons, the most able pupils were not sufficiently challenged. The quality of teachers' marking varies. In a few cases it gives pupils helpful information so they are aware of strengths and weaknesses in their learning, In others it is usually ticked with a one-word comment and does not tell pupils how they can improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced. Significantly enriched by links with the community and educational visits. Numeracy and literacy strategies successfully implemented. Good opportunities for musical performance. The school competes successfully in sports.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall provision is good. Individual education plans are relevant and regularly reviewed. Pupils receive good support in lessons. However, parents and pupils are insufficiently involved in formulating and reviewing targets in education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good spiritual development. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect and consider the values of others. Very good moral and social development. Pupils understand the importance of helping others and are given a range of responsibilities as they get older. Good cultural development. Pupils have opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures especially through art, music and drama.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a caring environment. Effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Too many inconsistencies in teachers' assessment and recording keeping. Overall, an effective partnership with parents but some inconsistencies regarding homework and pupils' end of year reports.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Effective leadership from the headteacher well supported by senior staff. Clear vision for the future supported by good action plans in each subject and aspect of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very supportive of the school. They work together well with management and staff to agree the educational direction of the school. All statutory duties met apart from some omissions in the annual governors' report to parents. Strategies for understanding strengths and weaknesses in standards and learning are not fully developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	School development planning is firmly focused on weaknesses identified through evaluation. Action to improve spelling was taken after an analysis of test results and improvement in assessment, a weakness identified in the inspection, is a target in the school improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	The school applies the principles of best value in its careful financial planning. Very effective use of finance from business and other benefactors to provide high quality facilities such as the music room and computer suite. Appropriately qualified teachers and support staff. Sufficient resources overall. Good quality in art, music, physical education and information technology. Many non-fiction library books are out of date and worn. Good accommodation includes a swimming pool and playing fields.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Teaching is good. • The school is approachable when they have questions or problems. • Children are helped to become responsible and caring. • Many recent developments which have improved facilities for learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication from teachers regarding homework; ensuring an appropriate amount is set. • Information about their child's progress on end of year reports • Arrangements for teaching their children when class teachers are absent. • Information about extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors support the positive views of parents. Parents' opinions about the amount of homework range from too much to not enough. Inspectors agree that there are inconsistencies in the amounts set and the quality of communications in home/school books. Consequently, parents are not always clear about when homework is set, the amount of time their child should spend on a task and when work should be returned. Pupils' reports vary in quality from teacher to teacher. In several instances, particularly in information technology and the non-core subjects, they do not give enough information about pupils' standards and focus too much on topics covered or pupils' attitudes. The school has used its best endeavours to secure good supply teachers whenever teachers are ill. However, it recognises that this has not always been possible and the continuity of pupils' education has, on occasions, been interrupted. It is continuing to seek improvements in the quality of teaching in these circumstances. There is not enough regular information for parents about when clubs take place and who is entitled to attend them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Results in national assessment tests have fluctuated over the past few years. The high proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register in Year 6 in 1998 and 1999 has influenced the test results. In 1998, 28 per cent, and in 1999, 29 per cent were on Stage 2 or above. Test results for 1999 show that attainment in English, mathematics and science is in line with national averages and those for similar schools. Current standards in these three subjects are judged to be above the national average. The differences between the test results and the inspection judgements are accounted for by the lower percentage of pupils on Stages 2 and 3 of the special needs register, which is currently 17 per cent, compared with the higher figures of previous years. In the four years since the last inspection the trend in test results is broadly in line with the national improvement.

2. Test data over the past four years and inspection judgements show no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for the Year 2000 tests of 80 per cent achieving national standards in English, and 85 per cent in mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that these targets are achievable by current Year 6 pupils.

3. Pupils' achievements when they start at the school fluctuate from year to year. There is a wide range of attainment similar to the national picture. Overall, pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress and achieve well. The rate of progress varies between classes and is highest in Years 3 and 6 where pupils experience the best teaching. Many pupils with special educational needs often achieve better than would be expected in relation to their individual needs. Most make good progress, especially when guided by good learning support assistants. In a few of the lessons observed the work for the highest attainers lacked the extra challenge to accelerate their progress. There is insufficient evidence to judge the progress made by gifted and talented pupils. However, in music and competitive sport, especially for the oldest pupils, the school provides good opportunities for those with particular aptitudes to excel.

4. As in the last inspection, pupils make good progress and achieve well in English, mathematics, science, art and geography. High standards have been maintained in music. There has been improvement in information technology where standards are rising as pupils benefit from good teaching in the computer suite. Achievement in history has improved and pupils develop good games skills in physical education. Standards in design and technology are average as in the last inspection.

5. In **English**, attainment is above average with a high proportion of pupils working at expected levels or above. Overall, pupils make good progress. Pupils listen attentively and express themselves clearly using a good range of vocabulary associated with different subjects. Pupils achieve good standards in reading. They learn to read expressively and accurately and the oldest pupils tackle some complex texts. Pupils use books satisfactorily for research but younger and lower attaining pupils have insufficient library skills. Standards in writing meet those expected nationally. Pupils produce a range of writing in English and in other subjects. Handwriting is well formed and neat. Spelling is satisfactory and improving as a result of the school's recent focus on raising standards in this aspect. Pupils apply and develop their literacy skills well in other subjects.

6. The attainment of Year 6 pupils is above average in **mathematics** with a high proportion achieving national standards. Pupils make good progress. At the end of the key stage, pupils of all abilities are confident in basic calculations and know their multiplication tables well. They measure angles to the

nearest degree and use formulae to calculate perimeter, area and volume. Pupils explain and record how problems are solved. They are confident in handling data and record their answers in a variety of graphs and charts. Numeracy skills are applied and used well in other subjects.

7. In **science** standards of attainment are above average by the end of Key Stage 2, with nearly all pupils working at expected levels or above. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 6 they gain a good factual knowledge of the subject and conduct fair tests carefully, for example, by changing one factor and keeping the others the same.

8. Standards in **information technology** are broadly in line with those expected nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils confidently use computers to communicate information. They learn some complex skills such as making computerised links between pages. In a few aspects of the subject pupils' skills are not so advanced, for example, in data handling and computerised control. Pupils are making good progress because of successful teaching in the excellent computer suite.

9. Pupils achieve good standards in **art**. They learn a range of techniques and apply them with creativity. Standards in **design and technology** are in line with those expected for pupils' ages. Pupils experience a suitable range of designing and making but there is not enough emphasis on pupils critically evaluating their work and identifying improvements. Pupils develop a good level of understanding in **geography**. They develop good mapping skills, knowledge of other cultures, and discuss issues related to the environment such as the rain forests. In **history** the standards are above those expected for pupils of similar ages. Pupils produce good quality work using a variety of sources including books, computers, visits to places of historical interest and visitors to the school. Standards in **music** are well above those expected. Pupils appreciate many different forms of music and perform to a high standard. In **physical education** pupils achieve good standards in games skills and at levels appropriate for their ages in the other aspects of the subject.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Pupils are very interested in their work and they sustain their concentration well during lessons. They are supportive of each other when working in groups and pairs, for example developing sequences of movements with a partner in PE, rehearsing music in small groups or exploring a synagogue web-site. Most pupils work independently when required, although opportunities to plan their own work are sometimes limited. Pupils throughout the school are happy to talk about themselves and their work and they contribute sensibly to class discussions. They applaud the achievements of others and are polite and confident with visiting adults. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are very good.

11. Standards of behaviour have improved in relation to the judgements at the last inspection. Behaviour in class, in assemblies and around the school is very good. Lunch-times are relaxed and sociable. Pupils consider others in their movement round the school, walking in a quiet, sensible way, routinely holding the doors open for those following. Most parents at the pre-inspection meeting commented favourably on the high standards of behaviour in the school. A small minority tended to disagree with this in the questionnaires. Pupils play amicably together at break times and clearly enjoy using the adventure play area.

12. There was one permanent exclusion last year, of a pupil who has since left the school. Although occasional incidents of bullying have occurred in the past no aggressive or unpleasant incidents were observed during the inspection. Inspectors discussed the issue of bullying with several pupils who did not feel it was a problem at school and are confident that any instances are quickly dealt with.

13. Attendance, at 95.8 per cent, is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. There is little unauthorised absence recorded. Very few pupils are late for school.

14. Personal development is enhanced by the increased responsibility that pupils take as they progress through the school. For instance, pupils return registers to the office, have class monitor tasks, tidy the library and help to care for various school pets. Elected house captains and vice-captains efficiently monitor the week's house points and take it in turns to announce the winners during Friday assemblies. Pupils perform confidently in these assemblies and clearly take a pride in sharing their achievements with the whole school. Paired reading is taken seriously and pupils are enthusiastic in their support of Infant School "buddies". Parents feel that this effectively promotes a caring approach among pupils. There is very good support for various charities throughout the year and pupils have imaginative ideas for fund-raising.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Of the teaching observed, 16 per cent was very good, 41 per cent was good, 40 per cent was satisfactory and 3 per cent unsatisfactory. The highest proportion of good and very good teaching was in Years 3 and 6. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection with less unsatisfactory and more very good teaching. In the lessons observed the teaching of literacy was sound overall with instances of good and very good teaching. In numeracy, teaching was good overall. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in withdrawal groups for specialist work, and in classes where they are often given good support by learning assistants. Most teachers give good guidance to support staff and involve them in planning. The teaching of these pupils is most effective when targets on individual education plans are incorporated into overall lesson plans and the learning targets for the session are shared with pupils.

16. Very good teaching and learning was characterised by well planned, challenging activities coupled with a swift lesson pace which ensured pupils were learning for the whole session. Pupils were set time targets and reminded of these regularly during the lesson. This was evident in a Year 6 literacy lesson where all elements of the lesson were challenging. Presentation of the text was very clear and pupils were fully involved and focused as they shared the reading tasks. The teacher phrased questions to ensure that all levels of attainment participated in discussion. Pupils were well prepared for challenging group tasks and responded with thoughtful answers for and against a nature reserve. The "plenary" session at the end of the lesson was used well to share learning and ideas. When teaching was less successful, and occasionally unsatisfactory, the pace of learning dropped when too much time was spent on recording and copying tasks or the group's activities were not well organised and time was wasted.

17. Overall, teachers' good understanding of the curriculum results in pupils acquiring a good range of skills and knowledge. During the inspection very good subject knowledge led to rapid learning, for example in some information technology and music lessons. A few teachers are less confident in their teaching of information technology but are well supported in team teaching arrangements. In most lessons seen teachers demonstrated a good understanding of teaching the numeracy and literacy strategies.

18. Teachers' planning is satisfactory. In the best examples teachers outline the structure of the lesson and give approximate timings for each section. This is helpful in guiding the pace of lessons. Learning objectives are usually clear but are not often shared with pupils. This limits their understanding of the purpose of the lesson. Most teachers have high expectations. They expect pupils to work hard and this is reflected in the generally high amount of work they produce and the effort they make. In several of the sound lessons expectations of the most able pupils were satisfactory but they lacked the extra challenge to make the good progress of other pupils. For example, in a Year 4 numeracy lesson, the most able pupils worked from the same work sheet as other pupils, practising existing skills rather than

being given tasks to challenge and extend their thinking. In several classes, teachers' records do not provide enough information to assist in planning for different levels of attainment. In others, information is detailed and helps teachers to provide challenging work for all pupils in their class.

19. Teaching methods are effective and generate pupils' interest. Lessons usually have a good balance of introduction, group or individual work and a session at the end to share and recap on learning. In a Year 6 science lesson a lively introduction included good questions which encouraged pupils to use their knowledge of forces, for instance, "Why do polar bears have pads on their feet?" Pupils' full participation in the discussions and the good quality of their written work reflected the enthusiasm generated in the lesson. Occasionally, pupils are not given enough opportunity to exercise independence and discuss their work. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher prescribed the investigative work too much and pupils were not given the chance to be creative by selecting equipment.

20. Pupils are managed with effective discipline in nearly all lessons, consequently they work hard and concentrate. Teachers' voices were never raised during the inspection. The calm atmosphere within classes is underpinned by the good relationships between adults and pupils. Learning resources are usually well organised and used effectively by teachers. In art lessons teachers ensure there is a range of equipment, such as different sized brushes, to select from. In a few classes teachers miss opportunities to use computers as additional tools for learning.

21. Teachers provide good ongoing support in lessons. Most are skilful at assessing difficulties as they move between groups or individuals, and provide effective support. Nearly all work is marked. However, the quality varies greatly between teachers and overall pupils have only a limited knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and how they are progressing. In the best examples, teachers make analytical comments which help pupils become aware of where they need to improve. In the majority of classes work is usually marked with a tick or one word comment. Individual pupil targets are recorded in a few sets of books but this is not common practice through the school. In many classes homework is used well to support pupils' learning. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they have to do and ensure pupils know how well they have performed. However, the effectiveness of homework is limited because in other classes parents report inconsistencies in the amount set. Parents are not always clear about what homework has been set, how long their children should spend on it and when it must be returned. Home/school books are not always used effectively to convey information about homework to and from school.

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

22. The quality, range and breadth of learning opportunities offered by the school are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when there were shortcomings in technology and multi-cultural education. All subjects of the National Curriculum meet statutory requirements and include a suitable emphasis on mathematics and English. The implementation of the numeracy and literacy strategies is successful and underpins the overall good progress of the pupils. Links between subjects, when appropriate, make the curriculum meaningful for the pupils. For example, skills taught in information technology are used purposefully to support work in a range of subjects.

23. The overall planning of the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers meet regularly in year groups to plan work which ensures that the content of the planned curriculum matches classes in the same year group. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The individual education plans for these pupils clearly identify achievable targets and are reviewed and updated regularly. Sex education meets statutory requirements and forms part of an appropriate personal, social and health education programme. A comprehensive scheme gives teachers very good guidance for educating pupils about issues regarding drug misuse.

24. The school makes excellent use of both the immediate and wider community to enrich pupils' learning. Educational visits, made easy by use of the school's minibuses, are made to a very wide range of destinations. These include Deal Castle, Dover Gaol, local farms and Canterbury for its cathedral, museum, environmental centre and theatres. Pupils are in regular contact with French pen friends. They visit the school and annual day trips are made to the French schools concerned. Conversational French enriches the curriculum for Years 4, 5 and 6. Year 6 pupils enjoy a week's residential camp in the summer term. A range of visitors to the school includes a professional singer working with the choir, theatre companies and a paper maker. Local studies support work in history and geography. Other links include those with the local church where the school holds several services. Generous donations from various local companies and benefactors have enabled the school to set up a specialist music room and an impressive up to date computer suite. A substantial sum has recently been donated to improve sporting facilities. The school offers a sound range of after school and lunchtime clubs. These include high quality musical activities and sports clubs. The school successfully participates in many competitive matches. The "bright sparks" club provides an interesting extension activity for the most able pupils.

25. The school has very effective links with its "feeder" infant school and the secondary school to which the majority of pupils transfer. Parents are particularly appreciative of the way the smooth transfer from the infant school is achieved. Pupils and teachers are in regular contact. For example, as part of their geographical work, the headteacher explains the features of the junior school to classes of infants and older junior pupils prepare books for their reading buddies in the infants. Co-ordinators from both secondary, infant and other junior schools meet regularly to discuss curricular issues and work in partnership on sporting and musical events.

26. Overall, the school ensures that pupils have equal curriculum opportunities. For example, times for instrumental lessons are changed each week to ensure pupils do not miss the same subjects. Pupils are taught positively about different ethnic or religious groups such as learning about the Chinese New Year from a pupil's relative. Girls and boys all have equal access to the curriculum, including after school clubs. A concern of parents has been the past situation in two classes where teacher illness has resulted in temporary staff teaching pupils or very occasionally pupils being sent to work in other classes. The school is seeking ways to improve teaching cover in these situations when pupils' continuity of learning is unexpectedly interrupted. Apart from when occasional staff illnesses cause problems, inspectors found no evidence to support the views of a few parents that classes shared between two teachers are disadvantaged.

27. Provision for spiritual development is good. The pupils are given opportunities for reflection on topics, such as their wishes for the new Millennium. They consider the beliefs of the main religious groups represented in this country and produce displays to illustrate what they have learnt. Pupils have time to consider the beauty of the world, for example through the very good range of musical activities. However, occasionally opportunities are missed to emphasise spirituality in lessons.

28. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Adults in the school provide very good role models on how to treat others. Pupils are taught a strong sense of right and wrong and gain an understanding of the importance of helping others. Older pupils are given a considerable amount of responsibility through the school's House System. They are taught the importance of saying 'sorry' and given the opportunity to discuss the relevance of punishment and an understanding of why actions are wrong. Pupils understand class rules displayed on walls because they are involved in formulating them. The school supports a number of charitable appeals, including many suggested by the pupils, for example they have raised money for the Blue Peter Appeal for those less fortunate than themselves.

29. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils participate in a range of musical and dramatic activities, including public performances. They develop their understanding of the beliefs and customs of other cultures, including Judaism and Sikhism. This knowledge is widened in geography and in art where Aboriginal and African techniques are studied. An understanding of European culture is developed through close contacts and visits with two French schools. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have improved since the last inspection. The key issue regarding multi cultural education has been successfully resolved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school provides a safe and caring environment; health and safety issues are given a high priority. Child protection arrangements are generally good and appropriate training is given to staff. Pupils are well supervised throughout the day. Nearly all teachers know their pupils well, monitor their personal development carefully and give good day to day support. A few teachers keep good ongoing records about pupils' personal development but others lack the detail which would be useful to a new teacher. The school acknowledges pupils' achievements in many ways such as in assemblies where pupils are given the opportunity to show the school what they have learned. For example, a class performed their own musical composition to accompany a story they had written. This has a very positive effect on pupils' development and self-esteem.

31. There are effective procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Each morning one of the governors voluntarily monitors registers for children who have not arrived at school. Parents are discouraged from taking holidays during term time. Good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour include a clear and simple rewards system involving house points. Teachers calmly use agreed sanctions for pupils who misbehave. In the lessons observed pupils were expected to behave well and most responded positively. Procedures for dealing with bullying are clear. Nearly all parents are confident that any incidents of bullying are dealt with well and pupils know whom to go to if problems arise. The school does not have a written policy for the physical restraint of pupils.

32. Overall, procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. National Curriculum and other test results are analysed and are used to monitor pupils' progress. This information identifies pupils who need extra help and is also used to set targets for end of key stage tests. Selected pieces of work are kept in pupils' individual portfolios. These build up a satisfactory picture of pupils' achievements. The school has collated examples of different levels of work in English, mathematics and science, however these are not used well to help teachers work to assign National Curriculum levels to pupils' work. Documentation for pupils with statements of special educational needs is up to date and appropriate arrangements, including liaison with outside agencies, made to meet these.

33. Ongoing assessment procedures are insufficiently detailed and are not consistent throughout the school. Most teachers keep a record of pupils' scores in English and mathematics but there are no effective systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress in other subjects such as science and information technology. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in the marking of pupils' work, although it remains inconsistent. A few teachers give detailed feedback to pupils, set targets for them and show them how to improve. Other teachers indicate if work is correct or not and give praise where it is due. The school is aware of these inconsistencies and has plans to review both the assessment policy and the marking policy in the near future. Assessment for pupils who have special educational needs is good. The targets set for each pupil are specific and success is easily measured to help plan future work, for example "to be able to read and write (specific) short vowel sounds". However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in reviewing and formulating their own targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Most parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They are happy with the standards achieved, the values promoted and the facilities provided. There is, however, some disagreement about the amount of homework that is set. Parents would like the use of home/school contact books to be more consistent and to be better informed about extra-curricular activities. Many parents feel that annual reports are too general and do not tell them enough about their child's achievements. Although parents appreciate the fact that most teachers were open to being seen at any time, there is a problem in one class in which parent/teacher discussions are not held in private. Parents felt that their children's progress had been affected in two classes by the employment of several temporary teachers used to cover staff illness.

35. About forty parents regularly help in class and in other practical ways. The very active joint Parents and Friends Association organises a range of social and fund-raising events which enabled over £4000 to be donated to the school last year. This money includes payment for the upkeep of the swimming pool and the two school minibuses. There is very good support for consultation evenings, productions and curriculum evenings but very little interest is shown in the governors' annual meeting with parents. Most parents are happy to help their children with homework, a commitment requested in the new home-school agreement. The school is aware of the need for improved communication about homework to ensure a consistent approach. Parents of pupils with special educational needs discuss their child's individual education plan during open evenings. However, they are not involved in drawing up the targets on the plan and are not sent copies of them. This limits parents' involvement and their ability to support their children's learning at home.

36. The quantity of information for parents is good with regular newsletters and an open door policy in operation. Consultation evenings are held in the autumn and spring terms with an opportunity to discuss the annual written report in the summer term. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Although the computerised annual reports are now presented in a standard format, their quality is inconsistent as some teachers write only very brief, non-evaluative comments for non-core subjects. Technology and IT are not reported separately and there is no provision for the pupil's comments. The new home-school agreement clearly outlines what is expected from the school, parents and children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. As in the previous inspection the leadership and management of the schools are successful in enabling pupils to attain high standards in most subjects. They have also created and maintained a positive environment in which pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour make a significant contribution to their learning and progress.

38. The headteacher provides experienced and effective leadership. He has a clear vision for the school, shared with governors and staff, which is well expressed in its aims, and is being fulfilled. He monitors the work of the school well, and has a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher offers considerable support to his colleagues, particularly to less experienced staff, which gives them confidence to develop their own practice. He takes an active lead in helping to improve and develop the curriculum, and ensuring that planned initiatives are put into practice. The headteacher wants pupils to achieve high standards, and values the broad and balanced curriculum provided by the school and the development of children as individuals. He receives good support from the deputy headteacher on issues regarding the pastoral care of the pupils and sense of community within the school. Most of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed, and marked improvements have been achieved in a number of areas.

39. Good delegation ensures an effective contribution from staff with management responsibilities. All teachers have clear responsibilities, and are encouraged to work closely alongside colleagues to fulfil their roles. Subject co-ordinators produce annual development plans, identifying priority tasks or targets to help improve standards in their subjects. The special educational needs co-ordinator understands her role well. She gives good support to staff in writing targets and has an appropriate action plan which includes improvements in the provision for the most able pupils.

40. Recorded work is monitored in most subjects, with the headteacher working alongside co-ordinators to check for quality and consistency, and feedback is given to individual teachers as necessary. The professional development of teachers is supported by half-yearly formal discussions with the headteacher, with agreed targets informing future priorities. There are good systems in place for the induction of new staff, and the school works effectively with Christchurch University College, Canterbury to provide initial teacher training opportunities.

41. The governing body is thoroughly involved in discussing all aspects of the school's work, and fulfils all its statutory responsibilities, with the exception of a few omissions in its annual report to parents. Governors bring a wide variety of expertise to their role, and have established good working relationships with the school management and staff. The governing body has established a strong pattern of working committees, which deal effectively with issues relating to curriculum, finance, staffing, buildings and their maintenance. It has been highly supportive of the school moving out of a difficult financial situation in the last few years, and has backed projects that have successfully led to the development of new facilities. The role of the governing body as a critical friend to the school is still developing. There are no agreed procedures to guide governors' visits to the school, for example to observe learning in classrooms or to discuss issues with co-ordinators. Their involvement in school development planning and reviewing progress made towards targets relies too heavily on information provided by the headteacher.

42. Whole school development planning is good; it takes account of evaluations of the school's performance, for example, improvements in pupils' spelling as a result of analysing national tests. Appropriate priorities are identified and relevant success criteria chosen to judge progress. An action plan for each subject is drawn up, following discussions between co-ordinators and the headteacher, then further discussions involving the whole staff. These are included in the school development plan, with specific time and cost allocations attached to each action plan. Other targets within the school development plan encompass issues relating to staff development, the school site and buildings, and the further involvement of the governing body. The school has rightly identified the need to improve assessment arrangements and procedures in the current plan, and has outlined appropriate action in the coming months. The progress towards targets is reviewed regularly by the teaching staff, and progress reports given to the governing body at meetings. However, the plan has a short-term perspective, and does not fully take account of priorities over the next few years.

43. The educational priorities for the school are well supported through its financial planning. Appropriate attention is given to implementing national initiatives, and making good use of associated funding. For example, very good use has been made of booster funding to support pupils preparing for national assessment tests. Past budget deficits, agreed by the local authority during a period of rapid school expansion, have been eliminated by careful financial control and applying the principles of "best value". A small surplus is projected for this financial year. The school has been highly successful in attracting additional funding from local sources to improve its facilities and resources for teaching information technology, music and physical education. Money used for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively to provide good quality staff and resources. The school makes effective use of new technology in its efficient day-to-day administration. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. The school building and grounds provide good quality accommodation, which support the teaching of a broad curriculum. This is an improvement from the last inspection when some pupils were taught in temporary outdoor classrooms. There are sufficient resources for numeracy and

literacy with particularly good resources in art, IT, music and physical education. Many of the books in the non-fiction library are becoming worn and old. The area is not conducive to personal study or research.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to raise the standards of education and rectify the weaknesses identified in the inspection, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

Improve assessment procedures and the recording of pupils' progress so that:

- There are consistent, agreed systems used by teachers in all subjects for the ongoing assessment of pupils' learning.
- The systems provide good quality information to assist with curriculum planning without becoming too onerous or time consuming for teachers.
- Short term planning is more consistently guided by information which clearly identifies those pupils who need more advanced tasks to challenge their thinking.
- In the end of year pupils' reports, all teachers consistently evaluate pupils' strengths, weaknesses and progress, especially in science, information technology and the non-core subjects.
- Better marking of pupils' work, including the setting of individual targets, gives pupils a better understanding of their own progress and how they might improve.

(see paragraphs: 18, 21, 32, 33, 50, 52, 56, 64, 67, 70, 77, 81, 89)

Improvements in assessment form part of the current school development plan.

Other smaller issues which the school should consider for inclusion in its action plan:

- Sharing learning objectives of lessons with pupils so they are clearer about the purpose of their learning. (paragraph 18).
- Improving communication regarding homework, where there are inconsistencies, so that parents are clearer about what is being set, how long their children should work at tasks and the time scale for completion. (paragraphs: 21, 48)
 - Ensuring that home/school contact books are regularly monitored to ensure pupils have entered their homework tasks correctly and that comments from parents are responded to quickly. (paragraphs 21, 48)
 - Ensuring end of year reports contain separate sections for information technology and design and technology. (paragraph 36)
 - Updating and improving the organisation of the non-fiction library, particularly by removing and replacing out of date stock. (paragraphs 43, 47, 48)
 - Involving parents and pupils more in the formulation and review of targets on individual plans for special educational needs. (paragraph 33, 35)
 - Continuing to seek ways of improving the quality of teaching when staff are absent. (paragraphs 26, 34)
 - Writing and implementing a policy for the physical restraint of pupils. (paragraph 31)
 - Ensuring parents and pupils are clear about when clubs take place and which children are eligible to attend. (paragraph 34)
 - Developing the role of governors so that they increase their knowledge of standards and pupils' learning. Devising procedures to guide governors when they formally visit the school. (paragraph 41)
 - Ensuring that, during consultation evenings, every parent has the opportunity to discuss their child's progress in confidence. (paragraph 34)

- Monitoring the use of classroom computers to ensure all teachers use them equally well. (paragraph 79)
- Ensuring that the Governors' Annual report to parents contains all the required information. (paragraph 41)

The figures in brackets refer to those parts of the report where the issues are discussed.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

69

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	16	41	40	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y3 – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

361

Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals

28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

Y3 – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

8

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

108

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

21

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	52	41	93

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	33	36	45
	Girls	31	28	33
	Total	64	64	78
Percentage of pupils	School	69 (63)	69 (68)	84(75)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	34	36	44
	Girls	31	29	32
	Total	65	64	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (65)	70 (74)	82 (75)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	30.1

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
	£
Total income	553041
Total expenditure	549175
Expenditure per pupil	1505
Balance brought forward from previous year	-12769
Balance carried forward to next year	-8903

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

361

Number of questionnaires returned

134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	42	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	46	5	3	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	56	10	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	47	23	5	2
The teaching is good.	43	50	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	41	23	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	34	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	34	8	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	46	14	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	37	49	10	3	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	7	2	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	45	12	2	5

Other issues raised by parents

The good links with Herne Infants' School.

The many improvements to the buildings and facilities for learning.

The high quality of music, including public performances.

The many ways pupils are taught to care for others.

Too many supply teachers in a few classes and pupils occasionally shared around different classes when staff are absent.

One teacher does not give parents an opportunity to discuss their pupils' progress in confidence.

A range of views was expressed on:

- The teaching of children with special educational needs and support given to their parents.
- The amount of competitive sport.
- The size of classes.
- The way with which parental concerns are dealt with.

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

ENGLISH

45. The results of national assessments in 1999, at the end of Key Stage 2, were broadly average, both nationally and compared to similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of the key stage, the proportion of pupils attaining national standards or higher is above average. Overall, standards are above average, in speaking and listening and reading. As in the last inspection, overall progress through the school is good. For example, work across the key stage shows good progress in the use of language and grammar between the lower and upper key stage. Progress in the lessons observed was satisfactory overall. All pupils made good progress in four out of ten lessons. However, there are variations in the progress made by the highest attainers where, in a few lessons, work was not challenging enough. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Capable classroom assistants are deployed well to support these pupils.

46. Pupils listen attentively to each other and most respond well to teachers' questions. As they get older they explain their work clearly using appropriate vocabulary. Pupils learn to speak confidently to larger audiences, for example, during assemblies they read poems, talk about their work or provide the narrative for a musical story. Pupils' speaking skills are enhanced by work in other subjects, for example, they discuss points of view about a nature reserve, suggest adjectives or phrases for objects they are handling or make joint decisions when working on computers. They use technical terms associated with different subjects well. However, during the literacy hour, the pace of learning slows in lessons when much of the speaking and listening is between the teacher and individual pupils and too little focused on group or paired discussion.

47. Progress in reading is good. Pupils express enjoyment for reading at school and at home. Most younger pupils apply their knowledge of phonics successfully and older pupils use the context of the writing to read unfamiliar words. Many pupils read fiction texts at their level, fluently, expressively and with good understanding. As they get older they discuss the plot and characters in their books in greater detail. Pupils express preferences for books and authors. They read a wide range of texts which help them to understand different styles of writing. For example, older pupils read and confidently discussed an article by the film critic of the Guardian. Most pupils read non-fiction at their own level and use the contents and index sections to find information. Older pupils understand more advanced features such as the use of a glossary. However, some lower attaining and younger pupils are unsure about how to find a book in the school library. Many try to use alphabetical order rather than using the number system or library categories.

48. The range of reading resources is wide and has contributed to the enthusiasm for reading. Scheme and non-scheme fiction is supplemented by good collections of poetry, fiction and non-fiction in the classroom. Sound use is made of technology for research using information stored on CDROMS and by exploring the Internet. The non-fiction library is in a corridor, with no room for browsing or independent study and with stock which is becoming worn and out of date. It does not provide a good environment for the development of library skills. Most pupils take reading books home and a record is kept in a home/school reading book. However, the books are not used consistently well by all teachers, and parents state that their comments are not always responded to.

49. The standard of writing at the end of the key stage is in line with national expectations. Pupils use drafting books well to develop their thinking and express ideas. Many pupils write good stories and poetry, for example, based on a poem by Ted Hughes. Pupils use literacy skills well across the curriculum, for example, explanatory writing and diagrams in science, report writing about the rain forest and writing about characters and events in history. Pupils' spelling skills are average but improving. The school identified this weakness through analysis of test results. Strategies including

work at home and a useful link with handwriting have been developed. Progress in joined handwriting is good and has improved since the last inspection.

50. The quality of teaching is sound overall, with nearly forty per cent of the lessons observed being good or better. Pupils' learning is good because of their high levels of effort, ability to work independently and productively during lessons. Teachers have good relationships and maintain a calm atmosphere in which pupils concentrate. Strengths in good and very good lessons include challenging work which is well matched to individual needs, including for the highest attainers, and tasks which allow pupils to be creative and develop their own ideas. A good pace is maintained in these successful lessons. Whole class teaching is usually good and the sessions at the end of the literacy hour used appropriately to share or reinforce learning. In weaker lessons learning objectives are not shared with pupils and they are unclear about the purpose of their learning. When work is not closely matched to the needs of the pupils, the progress of the most able pupils slows, for example, when the same work sheets are used for all groups. This was evident in a lesson in the middle of the key stage where a few brighter pupils found the work too easy and completed it quickly. Although marking is positive most teachers make few comments on content or points for improvement.

51. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and have a positive effect on their learning. They show interest in their work and settle to tasks sensibly.

52. Thirty per cent of curriculum time is devoted to English to ensure that the literacy hour is supplemented by other work such as group reading and extended writing. Planning is appropriately linked to the structure of the National Literacy Strategy, but there is no overall plan for speaking and listening to guide teachers. New assessment records for reading have recently been introduced but the detail and usefulness of information in planning work varies amongst teachers. Other procedures for recording progress are satisfactory. Pupils' achievements are tracked well through test results.

53. The subject is well managed. The school has implemented the literacy hour well. Teaching is monitored regularly and training has ensured that, overall, staff have a good understanding of the literacy strategy.

MATHEMATICS

54. Pupils' results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were close to the national average. The proportion attaining the higher level 5 was above the national average, and overall results were in line with similar schools. Taking into account the standards seen in lessons and the previously completed work, the attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 is above the national average. The majority of pupils are working at Level 4, the expected national standard, and around a quarter are confidently working at the higher Level 5. At the end of the key stage, pupils of all abilities are confident in basic calculations and know their multiplication tables well. They measure angles to the nearest degree and use formulae to calculate perimeter, area and volume. Pupils apply the appropriate number calculation to problems and explain and record how the problem was solved. They are confident in handling data and record their answers in a variety of graphs and charts.

55. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive effect on standards especially in the development of oral skills at the beginning of each lesson. Overall, teaching is good and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Pupils make a good start when they come into the school. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations in both work and behaviour, and make good progress. Pupils learn basic skills and the use of correct mathematical vocabulary well because of teachers' careful planning and lesson preparation. The clear start to lessons motivates pupils well. They are very attentive and show interest in their work by asking and answering questions. Teachers' good questioning encourages pupils to think for themselves and explain their working. For example, a pupil in a Year 6 class demonstrated to the class how he had worked out a problem and explained the strategies he had used. In a few lessons teachers tell the class what they will learn and how long it should take, this is helpful in giving pupils an understanding of the purpose of the lesson. Teachers demonstrate and explain the work clearly and ensure that pupils are given help where it is needed.

Lessons are well organised and teachers work well with learning support assistants. This is especially valuable for pupils with special educational needs who make good progress. In most classes pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged and so make good progress. In a minority of lessons the same work is given to all but the supported group, and some pupils struggle while the more able repeat work they have already understood. This is particularly the case where worksheets present more work than many of the pupils could possibly complete. In a few lessons there was an overemphasis on recording, which slowed the pace of the lesson and detracted from the mathematics being taught.

56. Teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and work is occasionally discussed and marked with the pupils. More general misconceptions are often addressed at the end of the lesson or in subsequent lessons. All pupils' books are marked. In a few classes there are constructive comments and points for development such as challenges to extend the pupils' learning or explanations of corrections. In other cases work is just ticked and is not helpful to pupils' understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Weekly planning does not often identify pupils who have particular aptitudes or problems which could assist with future lesson planning. Teachers keep a record of the annual test results, which usefully track pupils' overall progress. Teachers in the same year groups plan together, although this was not evident in Year 5 where the work differed from class to class, both in content and recording.

57. The curriculum for mathematics is good. It covers all statutory requirements and sound use is made of information technology. Numeracy is used well in other subjects. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson, pupils estimated how much weight a boat could withstand before sinking, then used 5 gram and 10 gram weights, tabulating their results. Year 6 pupils use graphs to compare rainfall and temperature in different places and timelines are used well in history. Teachers' planning is effectively based on the National Numeracy Strategy and good emphasis is placed on mental mathematics and number work, and on developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator has begun a programme of monitoring teaching to good effect. Since the last inspection good progress has been maintained in the subject.

SCIENCE

58. The results of the 1999 national assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 show attainment to be close to the national average, and broadly in line with similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was close to the national average. Results over a four-year period to 1999 show a gradual improvement, in line with the national trend. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that standards of attainment are above average by the end of Key Stage 2, with nearly all pupils working at expected levels or above. Good progress and standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

59. In their current work about forces, Year 6 pupils show a good understanding of friction, and how it can be increased or reduced when different surfaces rub against each other. Pupils apply this to their working knowledge of a bicycle, and suggest where friction needs to be increased, and reduced, in order for it to run smoothly. Pupils know how to conduct a fair test, and know that all conditions except one variable must be kept constant. Year 6 pupils' past work shows a good factual knowledge, with some detailed investigations. Most pupils' recording is of a very good standard, both in presentation and content.

60. Pupils' work shows that they make good progress across the key stage, with the best progress towards the end of the school. Their recorded work becomes more detailed, and experimental work is more rigorous. Throughout the school there is good emphasis placed on teaching the correct scientific vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and are well supported by

classroom assistants. Higher attainers are generally given the same work as other pupils, but are often challenged by their teachers to provide more complex explanations.

61. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching was good or better in over half of the lessons observed, and at least satisfactory in the others. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which is reflected in their astute questioning of pupils and their clear explanations. This helps pupils to understand new ideas and to learn new scientific vocabulary. Teachers also give helpful and original demonstrations, to illustrate different concepts. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils tried a practical demonstration to simulate how the Earth orbits the sun once a year, and how the moon orbits Earth once every 28 days. This encouraged the pupils to think about how the Earth spins on its own axis, and why the speed at which planets rotate differs. In the best lessons, teaching moves at pace, with skilful use of open questions to assess pupils' knowledge, extend their understanding, and challenge more able pupils. Good use is made of resources to demonstrate principles clearly. Although practical demonstrations are used consistently well by teachers in each topic, in a few classes pupils are not given regular opportunities to organise their own experiments, and develop their own investigation skills. There is a variation in Year 5 where one class is completing more recorded experimental work than the others. Teachers have recently been given guidelines to ensure a minimum number of detailed investigations are taught each term, and there are plans to increase independent experimental work.

62. Literacy, numeracy and information technology skills are taught effectively in science lessons. Pupils are encouraged to take measurements accurately, consolidating their mathematical skills, and to present their findings using a range of tables and graphs. For example, Year 6 pupils recorded data from their experiment on the insulation properties of different materials on a spreadsheet program. They displayed their results by using computer software to produce line graphs. Learning during investigations is often supported by high quality written work, which explains methods and findings clearly.

63. Pupils in all year groups enjoy science lessons and are eager to learn. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to teachers, enjoy practical investigations, and work well co-operatively. For example, in a Year 4 lesson pupils made their own vessels from tin foil to study balancing forces and the concept of displacement of water. They worked carefully and sensibly in pairs, to measure using different weights and record how much mass their boats would hold before they sank.

64. The science curriculum is often linked effectively to other subjects, for example geography. The co-ordinator has produced good planning to guide teachers, and has an appropriate action plan which includes reviewing the curriculum in the light of new national guidance. The co-ordinator has not had opportunities to monitor teaching and learning within classrooms, but has examined work from each class to help gain an overview of standards. Good resources are used well to support learning. The school is yet to make consistently good use of assessment procedures, including the analysis of end of topic tests, to help identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and to assist with future planning. There are no consistent systems for teachers to evaluate and record pupils' progress; the detail and quality of information varies from teacher to teacher.

In many of the foundation subjects too few lessons were seen to make overall judgements about teaching and some other aspects. Where appropriate, strengths and weaknesses of the lessons seen are referred to.

ART

65. Evidence from past work and in lessons indicates that pupils' standards are above those expected for their ages and they make good progress. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils have a wide range of experiences to help develop their techniques, knowledge and

understanding. Skills are developed systematically throughout the school following good guidance from a scheme of work.

66. Pupils gain a good knowledge of different artists, including art from other cultures. For example, they study the work of Matisse and William Morris, represent the patterns of animal skins as part of African design work and investigate Aboriginal art. In the lessons observed, good teacher knowledge underpinned the effective teaching of basic skills and encouragement of creativity. Consequently, pupils' techniques are well established and they work confidently without inhibition. For example, with only a short reminder from the teacher, pupils in Year 5 applied water to the paper to blend different coloured paints well and used different sized dry brushes for the foreground to build up lively pictures of a desert scene. Younger pupils make models of faces, learning the correct positioning of the eyes, mouth and the importance of correct proportions. A good range of well-presented work is evident around the school and includes the use of computer art packages, for example to produce exciting abstract interpretations of the millennium. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and take pride in their work.

67. The subject is well managed and future developments, such as an increase in three-dimensional art, have been identified. There are no consistent procedures for assessment or for the ongoing recording of pupils' achievements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

68. Evidence from past work and discussions with pupils indicates that standards are broadly in line with those expected for the pupils' ages and similar to the last inspection. Pupils experience a sound range of design and technology projects.

69. In Year 3, pupils make models of animals with moving parts, and produce textile designs incorporating weaving patterns. However, design skills are not well developed in these projects. Year 4 pupils design and make model vehicles, with double axles and a wooden chassis. Pupils consider how friction needs to be lessened for the wheels, prior to designing their models. They are taught to make different construction joints and accurately measure and cut lengths of wood. Quality materials are used to make the vehicles, and appropriate emphasis is placed on each stage of the process. In Year 5, pupils design and make toy models, incorporating basic electrical circuits. This topic extends their work in science, but there is too little emphasis placed on recording each stage of the process, and too much reliance on using junk modelling materials. Good links with science are also used in a Year 6 project on making towers. Pupils extend their knowledge of forces, and the use of mathematical shapes, when trying to construct stable tower structures from paper cylinders. Appropriate recording methods help pupils work through the project systematically, including good use of a digital camera to photograph their models. Overall, pupils are encouraged to comment on the quality of their completed work but there is not enough emphasis on critically evaluating their work to bring about improvements.

70. Since the last inspection, the school has revised its policy documents, and recently produced a new scheme of work. This takes account of textile and food technology, which were not being adequately addressed at the time of the last inspection, and good links with other subjects. Procedures for recording pupils' progress are inconsistent and not sufficiently developed overall.

GEOGRAPHY

71. Evidence from past work indicates that the school has maintained its good standards in geography since the last inspection. Pupils develop good geographical skills and understanding during their time at the school.

72. In Year 3 pupils develop good mapping skills through the use of co-ordinates and drawing plans to scale. Year 4 pupils learn well through undertaking fieldwork; for example, during a farmland study they examine soil samples, make maps of land use and draw a route plan of the walk. They consider local issues such as the building of the new A299 by-pass. In Year 5 pupils' work is enhanced by good links with science. During their study of the water cycle and the life of a river, pupils carry out investigations to understand evaporation. Year 6 pupils carry out a detailed study of the rain forest in which they develop skills in free writing and research using information technology and books. It was possible to observe only one lesson. This featured some good questioning by the teacher which helped pupils to understand the reasons they were looking at wind speeds and the need for the Beaufort scale. Pupils were fascinated by the work. Good attitudes are reflected in the neat careful presentation of work, particularly in older pupils' books.

73. The subject is enthusiastically managed. An action plan identifies appropriate future developments in the subject including orienteering, adaptation of the curriculum to the latest government guidance and improved links with information technology. A useful scheme of work supports teachers' planning. Links with schools in France enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures.

HISTORY

74. Evidence from the work seen and lessons observed, shows that the standards are above those expected for pupils of similar ages nationally. This is an improvement from the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have studied a wide variety of topics to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of historical events.

75. In Year 4 pupils discuss major aspects of Celtic life in early Britain such as hill forts, Celtic dress and Celtic religions. Pupils of all ages use time lines successfully to identify the period they are studying. Year 5 study the Victorians and produce good quality imaginative and factual writing to explain how Victorians used to live. Year 6 investigate life in Tudor Britain, for example the sinking of the Mary Rose and why the ship was important in the first place. They develop a good variety of research skills using books and information technology to support their learning. Interesting work is well presented in books.

76. The strengths of teaching in the lessons seen included carefully framed questions that kept pupils of all abilities involved and interested. Good use of role-play made the work meaningful to pupils. Work is usually matched to pupils' attainment as in a Year 4 lesson where the most able pupils had to draw a Roman Town to scale and decide where the buildings should go. Occasionally, the introductions to lessons were too long and learning slowed. Pupils behaved well in the lessons and discussed their work enthusiastically.

77. The school has a clear scheme of work to guide teachers. The subject is well managed. An action plan appropriately includes improved links with information technology. There are no consistent ongoing procedures for assessment or recording pupils' progress. A range of visits and visitors into the school enriches learning. These include special days, such as a recent one organised by a "Roman soldier", which enhance pupils' understanding and enliven their interest.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

78. Standards in information technology are broadly in line with those expected nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils confidently use computers to communicate information. For example, they select different typefaces and combine pictures, including those produced with a digital camera, with text. Older pupils learn some advanced skills such as making computerised links, which enable a reader to turn pages by clicking a button. Pupils make attractive story books for children in the infant school. They learn how to adapt page designs and text for their audience, which develops their literacy skills well. As they get older pupils use the Internet competently to find information. E-mails sent and

received from a French school are particularly helpful in supporting pupils' cultural development. In a few aspects of the subject pupils' skills are not so advanced. For example, most Year 6 pupils have not learnt how to question and sort information in a database, and their experience of computerised control by sequencing instructions is limited.

79. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The successful use of the excellent computer suite, developed during the past year, has had a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Progress in the specialised lessons in the suite was good and on occasions very good. Pupils have access to seventeen high quality machines. The teachers observed had a good understanding of those aspects of the subject they taught. They used the main projection screen confidently and gave clear instructions to pupils. Pupils consequently maintained concentration and their pace of learning was good. In the very good lessons pupils' progress was rapid because teachers were very confident and ensured pupils' active learning during the whole session. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson when pupils accessed a web site with a search engine, used the information to interpret their names in Egyptian hieroglyphs, printed them out and discovered the meaning of each symbol. For teachers who are less confident, a highly effective system of team teaching has been established. The co-ordinator trains teachers during a session prior to the lesson, the teacher then works with the co-ordinator, who often takes the lead in the lesson. The class teacher then teaches a follow-up lesson later in the week. In a few lessons, progress slowed when pupils waited too long for the next stage of teaching. For example, when a complicated web-site address was written on the board for pupils to enter, less able pupils found it difficult to copy the information correctly whilst other pupils waited for the next instruction. Although older equipment is being used successfully in many classrooms to support learning, most of these machines have limited applications. Pupils in one Year 5 class take turns to record all their work on a computer, which helps them to evaluate the success of using computers with other ways of working. In a few other classes, opportunities are missed for using computers in lessons as another tool for learning.

80. Pupils are very interested in their work, share tasks sensibly and discuss their decisions with a partner. Occasionally pupils have to be reminded to focus on their work but most have high levels of concentration and behave well. Pupils' good attitudes enhance their learning.

81. The curriculum is appropriately planned using national guidelines. It is made particularly relevant to the pupils as it is linked to work in other subjects. For example, pupils learnt about synagogues from a web site and others attempted puzzles or tests to support their numeracy work. There are no consistent procedures for assessing pupils' attainment or for tracking their progress. As much of the work is new to pupils, this weakness is not currently having a significant impact on learning. However, the school recognises the need to keep better ongoing records which accurately identify those pupils who require extra support and those who need extending. The subject is well led and managed. Plans for the future are clearly aimed at raising standards and include the use of computers to control models. The school has made excellent use of generous finance from local business to set up the computer suite. There have been many improvements in provision and standards compared with those described in the last inspection.

MUSIC

82. Standards are well above those expected for the pupils' ages. Evidence was gained from lessons, assemblies, year group singing, clubs and video and audio tapes. Most pupils in Year 3 perform simple repeating patterns using a range of percussion instruments. This ability is built on well in Year 4 where the pupils have a very good sense of pulse and dynamics when composing their own tunes. By the end of Year 6 pupils perform to the rest of the class with great confidence. The level of refinement pupils undertake when rehearsing and performing their compositions is well above average. The high level of skill was reflected in a lesson where pupils improvised and composed Tudor music in groups using musical notation. Pupils appreciate and competently evaluate different forms of music.

83. Pupils' attitudes to music are very good. They behave very well, enjoy music, handle instruments carefully and collaborate sensibly. Pupils value others' performances by spontaneously applauding.

84. The teaching observed ranged from good to very good. All lessons moved along at a rapid pace to ensure a good momentum to pupils' learning. The development of pupils' voices, including an effective technique of moving amongst the class and encouraging singing on a one to one basis, was impressive. Teachers monitor pupils carefully when they are working on practical tasks and intervene to provide good quality support. In a very good lesson, teachers developed pupils' ability to perform rounds, and refrains, insisting on high standards and significantly increasing their confidence.

85. The subject is enthusiastically led and well managed by staff with a high level of expertise. The curriculum is enriched by good opportunities for public performances including singing at the retirement of a bishop at Canterbury Cathedral. Orchestra, choir clubs and individual instrumental tuition provide very good opportunities for talented pupils. Good musical resources include a range of instruments from other countries. A well-resourced, purpose built music room provides a very good environment for learning music. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

86. In the majority of lessons, pupils attained standards appropriate for their ages. Evidence from lessons, extra-curricular activities and competitive sport indicates that standards are above expectations in games skills. Pupils have good skills in hockey, football and netball; they demonstrate good control of the ball and accurate passing. Pupils are aware of safety rules and understand the importance of warming up exercises. In gymnastics, younger pupils show agility and control in jumping and landing. Older pupils develop individual and partner work into long, polished sequences of twisting, turning and symmetrical balances.

87. Pupils follow instructions promptly and usually behave well. They work well together, discussing their tasks sensibly. For example, in a lesson involving balances, pupils depended on each other for support. Pupils organise equipment safely.

88. Strengths of the teaching seen include high expectations of pupils' achievement, a brisk pace to lessons which kept pupils fully active and good use of pupil demonstration to improve the quality of performance, for example in gymnastics. In the less successful lessons, pupils waited too long for their "turn", or instructions were unclear and some groups did not carry out the activities intended.

89. The subject is well managed and improvements since the last inspection, such as a programme for teaching dance, have been implemented well to broaden the curriculum. The school makes very good use of its accommodation and extensive grounds to give pupils a wide range of experiences. This includes an indoor swimming pool used for teaching pupils during the summer and autumn terms. Swimming and athletics awards provide useful aids to assessing pupils although the ongoing recording and assessment of other achievements are not well developed. Outdoor adventurous activities for Year 6 and the good range of clubs and competitive sport enrich the curriculum and contribute well to pupils' social development. Pupils have good opportunities to excel through the school's successful participation in many sporting competitions. These also provide good opportunities for talented pupils, a few of whom have represented area and county teams.

