

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CASTLECOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Mottingham, London

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101606

Headteacher: Mrs J Shepherd

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Hitchcock  
2535

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> April 2000

Inspection number: 189664

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Castlecombe Road Mottingham London
Postcode:	SE9 4AT
Telephone number:	0208 857 1504
Fax number:	0208 857 9172
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Edmonds
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs G Hitchcock	Registered inspector	Geography History	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Mr A Smith	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its' pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	English Art Physical education Design and technology	
Mrs B Knowles	Team inspector	Science Information technology Religious education Under fives	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr C Gray	Team inspector	Mathematics Music	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

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

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Castlecombe Primary School is set in a small, economically deprived area in Mottingham, on the outskirts of London. The school serves the immediate area, but there is a waiting list of parents wanting to send their children to the school, many of whom are prepared to travel some distance to the school, as it is popular. There are 224 pupils (about the same as other primary schools), with 107 boys and 117 girls, aged from four to eleven. At the time of the last inspection there were 231 pupils. The lower numbers are due to the requirement for smaller class sizes for pupils of this age. Children start school in the September if they are five before February and in January if they are five before the end of August. At the time of the inspection there were eleven pupils aged four. There is no nursery provision in the area so pupils have not had the benefit of nursery education when they start school and their attainment on entry is below average. Eighty-three pupils (37%) are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. Seventy-one pupils (32%) are on the school's special educational needs register, which is well above average, and is the same as the last inspection. No pupils have statements of special educational need, which is below average. Seven per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is slightly above average, but none of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is below average in comparison with other schools. Pupils are taught in 8 classes by 8 teachers on a full-time basis. In addition, the headteacher also teaches part-time. The average class size is 28. A Neighbourhood Learning Centre, which provides adult education for parents and joint parent and pupil classes, is now based at the school.

## HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school. Standards have risen steadily since the last report, particularly in mathematics. Pupils achieve well compared to their standards when they start school and in comparison with similar schools, which is a tribute to the very effective teaching, 57 per cent of which is very good or excellent. It also reflects the very good leadership and management where the headteacher successfully inspires both pupils and staff to pull together and do their best. This results in an exceptionally positive and stimulating atmosphere within the school, where all pupils are respected and valued and they gain confidence and maturity as they move through the school. The care provided for pupils is excellent and includes concern for pupils' academic progress, sensitivity to their needs and to any personal concerns. It extends beyond the time they leave school, so that every week pupils from secondary school return for a homework club where they are supported in coping with life in their new schools. The school has taken highly effective steps to improve links with parents and the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, which is in its second year, provides first class opportunities for parents to improve their own skills and to work alongside their children. This is beginning to have a significant effect on pupils' progress. The school manages the budget well and despite having a large surplus, has clear plans for how the money is to be spent to benefit pupils. It receives about the average income for a London school and provides very good value for money.

### What the school does well

- The teaching is very good overall. It is excellent in Key Stage 1 (pupils aged 5-7).
- The leadership is very good. The headteacher has an excellent, clear vision of what the school should be and creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and hard work.
- Standards are improving steadily and are well above average in comparison with similar schools.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons, such as the links with schools in other European countries and the exciting new Virtual Action Zone involving worldwide computer links.
- The very high expectations that pupils will do well, linked with the very high level of personal support and care, which even extends after they leave the school through the homework club for secondary pupils.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the highly effective extra support for pupils in Key Stage 1.
- The partnership with parents and the community through the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, where parents have the chance both to learn new skills themselves and to work alongside their children.

### What could be improved

- Provision for the pupils aged under five, where the activities are not geared closely enough to the need for these children to have sufficient opportunities for activities designed to improve their creative, imaginative and physical development. Children's progress from day to day is not checked sufficiently closely.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection in October 1996. It has tackled all the issues raised in the previous report. Standards have improved and the quality of teaching has improved significantly, partly as a result of the improved monitoring of teaching. Assessment has also improved considerably and is now very good; teachers use the information they gain about pupils' progress very effectively to plan their lessons. A major improvement is the innovative Mottingham Children Project for involving parents in their children's learning, which is now used as a model in the borough. The leadership and management of the school have improved, with clear procedures for identifying weaknesses and taking decisions leading to improvement. The headteacher has a clear vision for what the school should be, which has led to the exciting new opportunities to be offered to pupils through involvement in a pilot 'Virtual Action Zone' based on world-wide learning using information technology.

## 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	D	D	D	A
mathematics	D	D	C	A
science	D	C	D	B

**Key**

Well above average    A  
 above average        B  
 Average                C  
 Below average        D  
 well below average   E

Since the last inspection standards have risen steadily, mainly due to the improved teaching and because the new literacy and numeracy strategies are having a positive impact. Inspection evidence shows that standards in mathematics in pupils' day-to-day work are now above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in line with average at the end of Key Stage 2. The higher achievements in Key Stage 1 are mainly because the 'early intervention strategy', where pupils receive additional teaching support for the basic skills, is having a noticeable impact on pupils' attainment. Standards in classwork in English and science also match the national average by the end of Key Stage 2, although writing standards still do not quite reach the level expected of 11 year olds. The school is in the top 5 per cent for English and mathematics when compared with similar schools and above average in science at the end of Key Stage 2. A particular strength in standards is pupils' listening skills and their investigative work in science and mathematics. Pupils also make particularly good progress in physical education, art and design technology. Given that pupils start school achieving standards that are below average, pupils achieve well; they make particularly good progress in Key Stage 1. The school has set very challenging targets for improvement and is on course to meet them. It is certainly on course to improve on current performance.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The pupils are enthusiastic about school and enjoy learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong; they behave thoughtfully towards each other and help make the school a pleasant and well-ordered community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop increasing confidence and maturity as they move up through the school and show initiative and responsibility by the time they are in Year 6 at the end of Key Stage 2. They help each other out and are sensitive to the feelings of others, especially when someone experiences personal distress.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school works hard to stress the importance of pupils attending school regularly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Excellent	Very 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.*

The teaching overall is very good and impacts well on pupils' learning. Teaching was at least very good in 57 per cent of lessons seen. In a further 30 per cent it was good and in 12 per cent it was satisfactory. One per cent of teaching seen was unsatisfactory and this was in the under-fives. There are particular strengths in Key Stage 1, where teaching was at least very good in 79 per cent of lessons and of these 42 per cent was excellent. This high standard of teaching is due to teachers' very high expectations of what pupils should and can achieve and their excellent match of work to the varying needs and abilities of the pupils. It is also helped by the 'early intervention' strategy, where additional support is provided to help those with special educational needs at this early stage in their schooling to conquer the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. There is some inspirational teaching, which leads to rapid gains in pupils' achievements. In Key Stage 2 teaching is very good overall; it was excellent in 6 per cent of lessons, very good in 42 per cent and good in a further 37 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. The reception class was taught by three different teachers during the inspection and the teaching varied widely from very good to unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory it is because lessons are not planned sufficiently closely to the national recommendations of what pupils of this age should learn and there are not enough opportunities for imaginative and exploratory activities. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good and is reflected in the steadily rising standards pupils achieve. Teachers support those with special educational needs and the high attainers very effectively, which means that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils learn very well, show a keen interest in their lessons and are very well aware of what they need to do to improve.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. There is a wide range of opportunities for learning. In particular the school visits to places of interest such as the residential visit to Swanage, visits to Greenwich, to the theatre to see 'Macbeth', and the links with European countries all help to broaden pupils' horizons. The new Virtual Action Zone, which was introduced the week before the inspection, is intended to extend pupils' learning even further.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and pupils have clear individual education plans. The very good support provided by teachers and classroom assistants has a positive impact on progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is a strength of the school and plays an important part in pupils' very good progress towards becoming mature, responsible individuals. The importance of mutual respect for adults and children is a key feature of the school's provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school provides high quality support and guidance for pupils. All staff show concern for pupils and are sensitive to the needs of individuals.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has an excellent, clear vision of what the school should be. Together with the senior staff she has created a strong team of hardworking staff who are committed to raising standards. The initiatives for increasing parents' involvement in learning make a major impact on pupils' progress.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors bring a wide range of skills and abilities, which they use for the benefit of the school. There is a very good working relationship between the headteacher and the governing body, which has a positive influence on the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and direct action is taken to improve performance. The headteacher is committed to improving this aspect still further in order to ensure that all aspects of the school are equally effective.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The funds available to help pupils with special educational needs and for staff training are used very effectively. There is a good range of learning resources, which have been improved recently with the purchase of new computers for an information technology suite.

Staffing, resources and accommodation are very good. The attractive five-year-old building and the learning environment created within it make a significant impact on pupils' progress. The school applies the principles of best value very well when purchasing goods and services.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils are expected to work hard.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• Their children like coming to school.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li><li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A small minority disagree with the amount of homework.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. Of the small minority of parents who disagreed with the amount of homework, some wanted more and some wanted less. The inspection team judged that an appropriate amount of homework is used very effectively to support pupils' learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

- 1 The school has set very challenging targets for improvements in standards and is on course to meet them. There are regular reviews of targets and the headteacher and senior management team are rigorous in their pursuit of ways to raise standards. Academic targets include raising levels of attainment in English and mathematics. Targets for the year 2001 are that 72% of pupils should reach average or above standards in English and 66% of pupils should reach similar levels in mathematics. By providing extra support for pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 1 through the 'Early Intervention' strategy the school intends to raise standards of the younger pupils, which they believe will have positive effects as pupils move up through the school. There are already strong indications that this is the case. In addition the school provides separate lessons in English and mathematics for the more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 in Key Stage 2 to help these pupils reach their full potential. The successful implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has also had a positive impact on standards.
- 2 Over the last three years standards have risen steadily since the last inspection, so that by 1999 pupils in Key Stage 1 achieved results that were above the national average in mathematics and above average in writing. Reading standards had improved, but were still below average. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards matched the national average in mathematics but were below average in English and science. However, when compared with similar schools, the school did extremely well; standards were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1; they were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. This is a real achievement given that pupils start school at the age of four with attainments that are below average and shows that pupils make good progress during their time in school. In comparison with similar schools the proportion of pupils gaining the higher than expected Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2 was well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English.
- 3 When pupils start school at the age of four attainments are generally below average, especially in speaking and listening skills, reading, writing and mathematics. They make satisfactory progress overall, but unsatisfactory progress in language development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. This is because the planning and teaching concentrates on those who have started studying the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stage 1, whereas more than a third of the class are still under five years old and do not have the freedom and stimulus of activities geared to the needs of these young children.

- 4 In Key Stage 1 pupils make rapid progress in their learning due to the excellent teaching, which provides a very good grounding in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. This gives pupils the confidence to succeed in other, creative activities as well as reading, writing and number. In Key Stage 2 progress slows slightly but is still good, due to the good teaching they receive. The slight drop in pupils' rates of learning is due partly to the smaller proportion of excellent teaching, although it is still very good, and partly to the fact that Key Stage 2 pupils have not benefited from the additional help at an early stage which is now provided by the early intervention strategy in Key Stage 1. The current Year 2 has a higher proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register than in 1999 and language skills are generally poorer. During the inspection the standards observed were average at the end of both key stages in reading, speaking and listening, and although still slightly below average in writing, they are approaching the national average. Pupils listen carefully to each other and the teachers, and are confident in speaking and reading to a group, for example a Year 1 pupil read her homework story aloud confidently to the whole class and all the pupils listened attentively. Older pupils speak with increasing confidence and clarity, as when a group of Year 5 pupils described how their moving toys worked during a design technology lesson. In Year 2 the more able writers respond to the teacher's high expectations by improving their writing with good use of descriptive language; for example one pupil wrote 'One blustery morning two scruffy boys set out to find a glittery shell'.
- 5 Standards in mathematics observed during the inspection are above average in Key Stage 1 and average in Key Stage 2. A major factor in the above average standards in Key Stage 1 is the standards of work that lower attaining pupils achieve as a result of the very good individual support they receive in their mathematics group. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of tens and units and can split two digit numbers into tens and units confidently. They recognise right angles and higher attaining pupils can interpret a scale measuring in millilitres. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are in line with average but the drop is not due to underachievement but to the fact that only Year 3 pupils have benefited from the early intervention scheme. The successful introduction of the numeracy strategy means that pupils' mental skills are developing well and are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- 6 Standards of attainment in science are broadly average at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils carry out systematic enquiries, as when one group of lower achieving pupils investigated pushing forces, using a hairdryer. Pupils can plan and carry out effective tests as when Year 2 pupils predict which materials will be the best for waterproofing before they submerge different materials in water. In Key Stage 2 pupils gain a sound understanding of forces, using elastic bands to propel objects in Year 3. Pupils make good use of information technology to extend their knowledge of science, as when Year 6 pupils use the Internet effectively to revise for their Key Stage 2 tests. Pupils also use information technology competently to help their learning in other subjects as when Year 6 pupils use the Internet to revise for science tests.
- 7 Literacy and numeracy are used well in other subjects of the curriculum, as when pupils present their results in graphical form in Year 4, after carrying out a playground survey in geography. Pupils are very well aware of how literacy helps them in their other lessons and respond well to teachers' reminders about how they can apply their learning in all lessons, as when pupils revised 'er' sounds in their revision song about germination in science.
- 8 Standards of attainment in information technology are currently in line with the standards expected of pupils of a similar age at the end of both key stages, although the new computer suite, teachers' good plans for development and the school's recent decision to take part in a 'Virtual Action Zone' suggests that standards should soon improve further. Standards in religious education are also average and pupils gain a sound understanding of Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity by the time they leave school at the age of eleven. In all other subjects of the curriculum, standards are average except in art, design technology and physical education, where standards are above average. This is a tribute to the very good teaching in the school and to pupils' very good response to their teachers' expectations and the good progress they achieve.

- 9 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the under fives and good progress throughout the rest of the school in relation to the targets set out in their individual education plans. This is due partly to the very good support they receive through the early intervention strategy in Key Stage 1, to the very good leadership provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator who sets a good example with her own high quality teaching, and partly to the good support pupils receive from teachers and classroom assistants. The small proportion of higher attaining pupils also make good progress. For example, in Key Stage 1 the teachers' very good assessment of pupils, results in some pupils joining Year 2 for literacy lessons, while in Years 5 and 6 the more able pupils benefit from teaching in more advanced groups for mathematics and English, which enables them to reach their full potential.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 10 Almost all pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. In the reception class, children settle quickly into the school's routines and establish a positive approach to learning. Through Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils enjoy school life, are very keen to learn and they work hard. They are very well motivated and responsive to the positive praise and encouragement offered by all staff and to the very good quality of teaching in the school. For example, in a religious education lesson, at the end of the day, almost the entire class volubly expressed disappointment when the teacher told them it was time to end the lesson; many wanted to stay and learn more. In a few isolated instances, a few pupils find difficulty in sustaining their concentration and motivation to stay attentive; these instances are where lessons are less well targeted to the individual needs of those pupils. Pupils genuinely enjoy displaying their work to both adults and other pupils.
- 11 Pupils' behaviour is very good. For example, at morning break times the pupils relate to each other in a generally very thoughtful and considerate manner. They recognise the playground rules for both the active and quieter areas. One pupil spent quite some time during a break period trying to locate a small purple teddy bear that a younger pupil had dropped in the playground; she was successful and returned it to him. During the inspection pupils behaved very well and quickly settled to work with positive effort. There was no aggressive behaviour or bullying observed and in conversation with pupils they expressed no concerns as well as being fully aware of what to do if they should feel threatened, that is, to go straight to a member of staff and relate their worry. There have been no exclusions from the school; this is below the average for schools of this size. Pupils accept and almost all respond well to the school's positive behaviour policy, which is followed carefully by all staff in order to maintain the positive and very caring learning environment.
- 12 Personal development of pupils is very good throughout the school. Pupils are eager to accept responsibilities, acting as classroom monitors, helping staff, tidying their own areas and assisting with equipment during assemblies. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for monitoring classrooms under the supervision of the teachers in wet playtimes and make a significant contribution to the school community. The school is very tidy and there was very little litter evident during the inspection week. This is in part due to the pupils' respect and feeling of pride in the school and grounds. For example, pupils at both break and lunch times collect litter and put it in the tidy bins provided. Older pupils support those who are younger and generally take care around the school of the younger and less confident ones. The school has taken part in the 'Playground Pals' training scheme and has promoted an awareness campaign for bullying with all classrooms displaying the slogan 'Yell, Run, Tell'. Relationships are very good between all adults and pupils as well as between pupils themselves. The positive level of respect at lunch times is good evidence of pupils' acceptance of the school's work in generating a positive atmosphere.

- 13 Attendance although generally satisfactory, is slightly below the national average. Authorised absence is slightly above the national average and this is accounted for by the higher than normal volume of medical related absences. Pupils are very eager to come to school and significant numbers of them do come to school early each day. The home/school's liaison is strongly improved by the morning communications with parents at this time. Pupils who come to school early are well supported and looked after by the school. The very good quality of attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships and satisfactory attendance across the whole school enhance the education the school offers.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

- 14 The quality of teaching in the school as a whole is very good. It is excellent in Key Stage 1, very good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory overall in reception. Teaching was at least good in 87 per cent of lessons seen, very good in 39 per cent and excellent in 18 per cent. In 1 per cent of lessons seen the teaching was unsatisfactory; this was in reception, where three different people taught the class during the inspection and where teaching varied widely from very good to unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, partly because improved monitoring has had an impact on the quality of teaching and partly because teachers' planning has improved and they are far more clear about what they are trying to achieve. The detailed guidance in the literacy and numeracy strategies has also had a positive impact and teachers have implemented these strategies enthusiastically and thoughtfully. For example, they introduced the guided reading part of the literacy strategy first then considered what worked best before moving on to bring in the next part. As a result they were confident in what they were doing and this has a very marked impact on pupils' progress. Teachers have embraced the new information technology initiatives equally enthusiastically, and are beginning to use information technology effectively to support learning in all subjects.
- 15 A particularly strong feature of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is the very high expectations of teachers, not only of pupils' behaviour but that pupils can and will succeed. They are determined that both boys and girls of all abilities should reach their full potential and adopt a skilful mixture of challenge and support to ensure that pupils do well. This rubs off on the pupils, who are very confident in their learning and consequently make excellent progress in their learning in Key Stage 1 and very good gains in learning in Key Stage 2. In Reception pupils' learning is generally satisfactory, but the rate at which they gain new skills, knowledge and understanding is not as good as it should be because the planning is not linked sufficiently closely to the nationally recommended goals for pupils aged under five. There is insufficient opportunity for imaginative and exploratory activities or outdoor physical development and assessment is not used sufficiently carefully to track the progress of individuals, who at this age sometimes make leaps forward in their learning and at other times may stand still for a while.
- 16 A special feature of the teaching at Castlecombe is that while teachers are focused on improving standards, they do not lose sight of the importance of pupils enjoying learning. One example of this was a Year 3 lesson where pupils had tremendous fun, with a great deal of laughter and enjoyment as they struggled with a challenging poem by Benjamin Zepaniah; they wanted to keep practising until they got it right and made very good progress in learning about the importance of rhythm when performing a poem. In a history lesson in Year 1 pupils enjoyed learning about the lives of rich and poor children in Victorian times so much that they really lived the part as they acted out what they thought these children would be doing at the end of the day. Pupils are managed very well and in almost all lessons any possible inattention or disruption is defused skilfully. It is a tribute to the high quality of the teaching and the very good relationships, which mean that learning takes place in a supportive environment, so that in the vast majority of the lessons there is an air of purposeful learning. An example of the mutual respect that fosters these positive relationships was when a Year 3 pupil volunteered the information that 'When you start at this school they treat you like a king'.

- 17 Teachers use assessment very well in Key Stages 1 and 2. They set targets for individual pupils and constantly check how well pupils understand what they are learning. For example in one Year 1 mathematics lesson the teacher realised that one pupil had grasped the idea of how to split numbers such as 14 into tens and units and had moved on to splitting numbers such as 587 into hundreds, tens and units. She was given different work from the rest of the group and ended up taking away numbers such as 89-34 in her head. The teacher's excellent use of assessment meant that the pupil was not marking time but was being challenged to reach a higher level. This challenge for higher attainers is another strength of the teaching and reflects the school's determination to improve standards. It is matched by the very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs, where pupils' individual needs are carefully monitored and the teaching is geared to helping them improve. For example, in one lesson where Year 1 pupils with special educational needs received a special lesson on mathematics, the teacher's combination of careful and patient support, mixed with a refusal to accept second best, meant that one pupil achieved the level expected of pupils of that age. This was very good progress considering that he started school with attainments that were well below average. Planning takes good account of pupils' individual education plans.
- 18 Teachers make very good use of the classroom assistants who work with them, as in a Year 5 English lesson for higher attainers, which was led very skilfully by a classroom assistant while the teacher concentrated on the rest of the class. This had a major impact on the progress these pupils made as they reached good standards in their analysis of characters in a story.
- 19 The teaching of basic skills such as reading, writing and numeracy is particularly important in this school where pupils start with attainment that is below average. It is satisfactory overall in Reception, but very good in Key Stage 2 where teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of how to teach literacy and numeracy has a very strong impact on pupils' progress. In Key Stage 1 the teaching of basic skills is excellent and has a major impact on pupils' progress and in their enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning. The system of 'early intervention' where teachers are able to give additional support to pupils with special educational needs and to high attainers is implemented very skilfully and effectively by teachers and support staff.
- 20 No time is wasted; lessons start promptly and usually proceed at a breathtaking pace. The good collection of new and attractive books is used very effectively to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning as when one pupil in Year 3 said 'I like to choose a nice fat book then when I get to the end I know I've learned something'. A striking feature of the teaching is the enthusiasm for the task of helping pupils and the excellent teamwork, where teachers support each other and share good ideas to improve lessons further. Teachers use homework very effectively to extend pupils' learning, ranging from encouraging reading practice amongst the younger pupils to challenging research from books and the Internet amongst older pupils.

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

- 21 The quality and range of learning opportunities is good for all pupils up to the age of 11, except for those aged five and under, where it is unsatisfactory, because learning opportunities are not sufficiently closely linked to the nationally recommended learning outcomes and goals for pupils of this age. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the literacy and numeracy hours have been introduced effectively, with very good opportunities to boost learning in both key stages by the provision of extra teaching and use of information technology. The school offers the breadth and balance of the national curriculum but also offers many extra opportunities for the pupils. These include a very good range of extra-curricular activities including art club, musical and sporting and homework clubs. The Year 7 homework club is a special feature of the school and reflects the care for the pupils, which continues after they leave. The cricket club is coached by a county player and the hockey club is helped by the local Hockey Association, both of which have a very positive impact on the standards pupils achieve in physical education. There is also a gardening club and a wild area club run by staff and a governor. There are very good opportunities to take part in the European Union Comenius Project and America club and pupils visit local old people's homes at harvest time and sing to them at Christmas.
- 22 Scientific investigation is a strength of the curriculum, with pupils able to devise their own tests, experiment and record results in a variety of ways, for example when they test the absorbency of a range of materials in Year 2. The school provides very good access to the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for by the support in special classes for higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 and in small group support for those with learning difficulties, especially at Key Stage 1. The effect of this is seen in improved standards, which, at this early stage, show every sign of being maintained into Key Stage 2 as pupils move up through the school. The needs of higher attaining pupils are addressed well in English and mathematics but not so well in science. The family literacy group offers parents an excellent chance to meet informally to discuss how they can help their children with reading and writing. They also improve their own confidence in helping their children's reading skills.
- 23 The use of information technology in all subjects of the curriculum has increased since the last report, partly due to improved staff training and partly to the improvement in the equipment available. The Comenius link with European countries is an excellent opportunity to explore European schools and learn about their countries. The new Virtual Action Zone, which will encourage pupils eventually to communicate with countries all over the world, is another development that is well placed to provide pupils with exciting opportunities to enhance their learning.
- 24 The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The Mottingham Children's project, which was set up to help support children in the area, provides very good support both for parents and pupils, by involving parents in their children's learning. The project is used as a model for the borough. All pupils are comfortable to go to teachers with their concerns. Teachers provide very good role models for the pupils and the excellent school video demonstrates the aim of the school as a happy place to learn.
- 25 The school has good links with secondary school that the pupils from this school move on to and very good links with the local independent secondary school. Students from the local independent school visit to hear pupils read and assist with computer work as part of their community service. A local trader sponsored an art competition to promote health awareness. Nepal 2000 was a joint art project with a major oil company and Eltham College, and pupils' good quality work was displayed in the atrium of BP's headquarters in London.

- 26 The overall provision for spiritual moral social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Provision for spiritual development is good. Common values and beliefs are shared throughout the school. The school meets legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship, which is of good quality. An example of the opportunities for spiritual development occurred in an art lesson where one pupil's involuntary exclamation of 'that's really fantastic' expressed genuine wonder at another pupil's creativity. A Year 1 lesson created a sense of awe when sharing ideas about Christian baptism when the christening candle was lit.
- 27 Moral development is very good. It is given great emphasis in school. The school song, which is sung with enthusiasm and composed from ideas given by the pupils, says, 'be honest and true to everyone at school. Take a real pride in Castlecombe'. Parents say that children come home and tell them what is right or wrong.
- 28 Social development is excellent. A rota of pupils act as 'playground pals' to be aware in the playground of the needs of lonely children. They wear yellow sweatshirts, are easily identifiable and are very effective in creating a positive atmosphere in the playground. Pupils value the credit and merit system of 'Castle' points for effort and behaviour. A popular Scout Group for boys and girls has been started by the school, with Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. Key Stage 1 children have a lonely dragon, which is taken home overnight, and pupils write in his diary.
- 29 Cultural development it is very good. The European Union Socrates Comenius Action Group links the school with four European countries, with the aim of sharing knowledge and understanding of each other's country. A European week will be celebrated in the summer term using the information, which has been sent. Outings are arranged to places of cultural interest, for example to a production of Swan Lake at the Albert Hall.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 30 In the previous inspection report the quality of care was considered to be generally appropriate and it was judged that the school had a calm and friendly atmosphere which was conducive to satisfactory learning. The quality of care has improved substantially and the school now cares very well for the pupils in its charge. The school is very effective in promoting the welfare and safety of its pupils. The atmosphere throughout the school is one of great care, and all staff are very deeply committed to the support of all their pupils in order to help them do as well as they can. For example one pupil in discussion with an adult said, 'When you come to school they treat you like a king' and another expressed the opinion that 'I like coming to school because you learn something every day here'.
- 31 The headteacher has responsibility for child protection and, along with the deputy headteacher, has received training; there are good procedures, of which the staff are aware. The school has beneficial contacts with the relevant agencies. There is an effective health and safety policy in place with members of staff and the governing body involved in on-going review. The school successfully supports pupils with special educational needs through well established procedures which meet with the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs for the early identification, monitoring and targeting of teaching support. The effective links with outside agencies make a positive contribution to the quality of education of these pupils.
- 32 Pupils are very well assessed academically particularly in English and mathematics, with detailed targets set to help pupils know what they need to do next in order to improve. This is followed up by very good tracking of progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. The day-to-day assessments by teachers of what pupils learn to assist in future lesson planning are used very well in Key Stages 1 and 2 but are not good enough in the under fives. For example in a Year 3 class the teacher carefully assessed pupils based on what was being taught in the lessons. Assessment of pupils' personal development is carried out well throughout the school.

- 33 The school's behaviour and bullying policies are well defined. All staff are consistent in their continuous and positive approach to managing behaviour across the whole school. The school's awards system is clear and pupils are eager to participate in order to claim rewards points not only for themselves but also for their 'house group'. Parents and pupils are fully aware of the school's views on the requirement for good behaviour and the need to maintain an absence of bullying. No inappropriate behaviour or any incidents of bullying were observed during the inspection. Pupils' behaviour is well monitored by all staff and where there is any concern, the school's effective strategies are used to improve individual pupils' behaviour. The school does have a clear attendance policy, which is applied and monitored rigorously by staff and the Education Welfare Officer in order to attempt to improve further the school's broadly satisfactory attendance and absence levels. The current high levels of medical authorised absence are monitored carefully and with a sensitive tolerance by the school.
- 34 Children are introduced with care into school in an attempt to minimise any stress or worries for both children and parents, with good links with parents and opportunities for pupils to come to school before they start. There are also good arrangements for transfer to secondary school and the school does all it can to ease the process, including weekly homework clubs where secondary pupils can return to their familiar surroundings to receive support and a friendly welcome.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 35 The school has vastly improved upon the weakness of links with parents highlighted in the last report. The school's partnership with parents is now very good overall. The information provided by the school is generally very good. Parents who attended the meeting with inspectors confirmed this and parents' positive responses to the inspection questionnaire further demonstrates that they generally are very happy with the quality of information supplied.
- 36 Those aspects of the school which parents felt very happy about from the questionnaires are the school's open access, staff availability and positive communications and their own involvement in the life of the school for the benefit of the pupils. They also like the fact that their children are expected to work hard and like coming to school. The area where slightly less satisfaction was indicated was the amount of homework, with some parents wanting more and some wanting less. Inspectors' judgements indicate that the school provides a very good range of out of school activities, that the volume of children's work is satisfactory and that the school works very well with parents to widen pupils' learning opportunities.
- 37 The pupils' detailed annual reports set future individual targets and include space for pupils' own opinions of their progress during the year. The school newsletters are a valuable source of information for parents about school issues, including social events, but do not contain curriculum information. However this is school policy and is well compensated for by the twice-termly open evenings, the effective school policy of open access to school in both the morning opening and the afternoon closing periods. The closing of the school day is particularly effective in that teachers escort pupils to the school gates where they are in communication with receiving parents. This is of great value in furthering home/school links. Parents' opinions agreed with the school's view that they receive information in the way that is most useful to them. Parents of children who have special needs are kept well informed of their children's progress and are invited to attend review meetings each term to discuss how well these pupils are achieving.
- 38 Since the last inspection the school has successfully taken on board much greater links with parents by becoming a base for the 'Neighbourhood Learning Centre' as well as participating fully in the "Mottingham Children Project". Both of these are highly effective in raising awareness of home-school links and the advantages of pupils and parents learning together. The school has produced an excellent video to help parents understand what their children are doing in school and how they are taught. There is an industrious Parent Teacher Association and the school governors are actively and willingly used to further pupils' knowledge of the wider world by their involvement in classes. The school's initial contact with new parents and the transfer to the secondary schools are well planned and prepared in good time.

- 39 There is a small but dependable band of parents who regularly assist in school and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning, supporting the very good work going on in the school. Parents are positively encouraged by the school to participate within school whenever possible, for example, in the development of the wild life area, which was a combined parent and staff activity. Parents are used effectively and given positive guidance that enables them to assist effectively in lessons. They work efficiently both in classrooms as well as on educational visits and also in assisting in the many extra curricular activities that the school manages for the pupils' benefit.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 40 The leadership and management of the school are very good and have improved since the last inspection. In particular the headteacher has an extremely clear vision of what the school should be and is supported very effectively by the senior management team and staff. This vision, which is shared by both teaching and non-teaching staff, has a major impact on the pupils' learning and the good progress they make, because pupils do their very best to learn and do well. There is very good delegation of responsibilities to teachers, so that all teachers play some part in the management of the school, which has a positive impact on creating a purposeful learning environment and on the excellent way aims and values of the school are translated into day-to-day life.
- 41 Staff are determined to do all in their power to help pupils develop into mature, self-controlled and thoughtful individuals who succeed in their work. As a result standards have improved steadily in recent years. In particular the headteacher, staff and governors take effective action to broaden the horizons of pupils beyond their own immediate neighbourhood. This is shown in the impressive links being developed through the European Union's Comenius Project, where the school has links with pupils from four other countries and the America Club where pupils correspond with children in America by e.mail. It is a tribute to the leadership of the headteacher that the school has just become involved in the pioneering 'Virtual Action Zone', where pupils will eventually communicate with others and access information on a worldwide basis.
- 42 Another example of clear leadership is the decision taken by the headteacher and governing body to provide extra support for pupils in Key Stage 1. This is intended to boost their basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy at an early stage, and so help them to achieve better standards in all subjects. It is having an extremely positive effect both on pupils' learning and their self-esteem.
- 43 The governing body is very effective in carrying out its duties. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed about the work of the school and bring a wide range of skills, including financial, business and local authority management, teaching, buildings maintenance and parental skills which are used effectively to benefit the school and shape its future direction. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, partly from feedback from the headteacher and teachers, and partly from their visits to classrooms. A number of governors have been involved in monitoring aspects of the school's work, for example in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and special educational needs. There are good plans to extend this further through regular observation of lessons.
- 44 The headteacher has set up a very good system of monitoring, where teachers are observed and targets are set for improvement. This has helped to sharpen the focus of teaching, which has, consequently, improved significantly since the last inspection. Together with the deputy headteacher she is currently involved in undergoing training with the aim of improving further the skills of all staff in observation of lessons and school self-evaluation.

- 45 The headteacher seizes every opportunity to gain outside help and ideas to improve the school, as in the development of the important Neighbourhood Learning Centre. This is geared to helping parents improve their own skills such as in literacy and numeracy with the aim of helping them to help their children. It is already having a positive impact on pupils' progress and is being used as a model for the borough.
- 46 The priorities set out in the school development plan are clear and concentrate on what the school needs to do next in order to improve, and very effective action is taken to meet its targets. One example is the fact that all of the key issues identified for improvement in the last inspection have been tackled very successfully. The shared commitment of the whole school community to continual improvement, and the determination that pupils will succeed, are outstanding.
- 47 There are very good levels of staffing, learning resources and accommodation. The school is bright, clean and well cared for, reflecting both the excellent contribution of the caretaker and his staff and the pupils' respect for their school, so that five years after it was built it is still immaculate. This has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. The money available to the school is used carefully to support educational priorities. One example is the headteacher's determination to continue to provide the high quality support for pupils in Key Stage 1 despite the fact that it is to lose some of the specific funding due to its success in raising the proportion of pupils who reach the level expected of seven-year-olds.
- 48 Money for specific purposes such as staff development is used very effectively and extends to providing special training for the classroom assistants, which has a significant impact on pupils' progress. Money allocated for special educational needs is used very effectively and provision for special educational needs is a strength of the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator monitors pupils' individual education plans carefully and provides very good leadership. A comparatively large surplus was carried forward from last year's budget, but the school has clear plans to use this money to benefit pupils, and has already used some of the surplus to purchase computers for the new information technology suite. The headteacher and governors are very careful about applying the principles of best value to the purchase of resources and services. Financial control is very efficient and the school makes good use of information technology. The friendly and efficient office staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school and to establishing positive links with parents.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 49 In order to improve the standards of attainment and quality of education further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

Improve the provision for pupils aged under five by:

- ensuring that planning is more closely linked to the nationally recommended learning outcomes and goals for pupils of this age;
- organising the classroom and timetable to reflect these plans more closely;
- providing more opportunities for outdoor physical development;
- providing more opportunities for imaginative and exploratory activities;
- devising a system of day-to-day assessment linked to the goals for under-fives, in order to keep close track of children's progress.

*(paragraphs 3,14,21,51,54,57,59,61)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
18	39	30	12	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		224
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		83

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		71

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	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	12	20	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	11	11
	Girls	16	19	19
	Total	28	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (67)	94 (67)	94 (71)
	National	82 (81)	83 (81)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	12
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	30	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (68)	97 (71)	97 (97)
	National	81 (82)	85 (86)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest 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	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	13
	Girls	14	11	12
	Total	23	20	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (59)	59 (44)	74 (72)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	10	13
	Girls	15	11	12
	Total	25	21	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (72)	62 (69)	74 (72)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	214
Any other minority ethnic group	6

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.9
Average class size	28

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	78

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

*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	421,536
Total expenditure	422,312
Expenditure per pupil	1,845
Balance brought forward from previous year	52,496
Balance carried forward to next year	51,720

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

159

Number of questionnaires returned

68

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	31	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	41	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	49	4	4	1
The teaching is good.	71	29	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	38	4	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	24	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	54	38	6	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	71	26	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	35	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	31	7	1	3

NB: Percentages of responses are rounded to nearest integer, sum may not = 100%

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

- 50 Children start school full time in reception class in September if they have their fifth birthday before the end of February and in January if their fifth birthday is between March and the end of August. Most children start with levels of attainment below those expected for their age, especially in speaking and listening skills, reading, writing and using and applying mathematics. Assessments when they start school show that many pupils' development is two years behind their chronological age, especially in language and in social development. Pupils stay in the reception class until they move into Year 1 in the September after they start school.
- 51 There are very good procedures for settling pupils into school. A visitor from the Nottingham Children's Project visits every family in reception class and children spend time in school at the Candy Club before they start. There are no nursery schools in the area, but some children have attended playgroups. Progress made in the reception class is unsatisfactory, particularly in language development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. This is mainly because planning and teaching concentrates on the older pupils in the class who have started work on the programmes of study for the national curriculum in Key Stage 1 subjects, whereas over a third of the class are aged less than five and do not have the freedom and stimulus of early learning activities.
- 52 Three teachers, including the regular reception class teacher, were seen in this class during the inspection. There are no nursery nurses in the class but a teaching assistant works with the teacher for three days a week. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and reach standards commensurate with their abilities. Teaching varied in this unusual situation from unsatisfactory to very good, with 10 per cent of teaching unsatisfactory, 30 per cent satisfactory, 30 per cent good and 30 per cent very good.

### **Personal and social**

- 53 Children make satisfactory progress in personal and social development, establishing effective relations with other children and adults. There was an incident of biting by a dominant child but most are aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They can work as a group and independently. They are able to concentrate, for example in their story time on the mat. They demonstrate independence in dressing and personal hygiene. They are beginning to take turns and share fairly, as illustrated by waiting their turn on the classroom computers, which they use confidently. They respond well to religious events such as the daily whole school assembly. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but a weakness is that pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to select an activity or resource, as the day is structured and directed by the teacher. During the inspection they adapted well to changes in routines and teachers. Children move around the school sensibly and go to the school hall for assemblies and physical education lessons in an orderly way. They behave well and are on track to meet the national goals for personal and social development by the time they are aged five.

## Language and literacy

- 54 Children listen to stories with enjoyment and are able to sing some nursery rhymes from memory. Many of the children have difficulty in expressing themselves clearly because of their lack of appropriate vocabulary. There are insufficient opportunities for imaginative role-play to develop the imagination and language skills. Enjoyment and enthusiasm for 'Big Books' in literacy hour depend on the teacher's presentation and use of text, which varied from very good to unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching was due to slow pace and work that was not geared sufficiently closely to the needs of the under-fives, but more to the pupils studying the National Curriculum. A minority of pupils can read along with the teacher but most were not able to and some made no attempt. The introduction of a light used as a 'magic finger' by one of the supply teachers, stimulated a greater response. There is insufficient writing activity, but the more able children can form letters, even though some letters are back to front and some write their names legibly, but with inappropriate use of upper and lower case letters. They are well behaved, despite constant reprimands.
- 55 There are books in the classroom, for example on their topic of plants but there is no reading corner where children can enjoy looking at books and insufficient time is given to this type of free activity. All children in reception have a book bag and a book is sent home each night for children to practise reading, and their knowledge of the sounds letters make is satisfactory. Rhyming in one lesson proved challenging for several but a few children were able to identify punctuation such as question marks and speech marks also the use of capital letters and full stops. Many children still have weak pencil control but write from left to right and are beginning to form letters correctly. The teaching of language and literacy for children in the reception class was variable. There were poorly labelled hand written targets and display features for children. Overall pupils are not making sufficient progress to reach the goals for language and literacy for five-year-olds.

## Mathematics

- 56 Children recognise and use numbers to 10. They are aware of number operations such as adding one more and 'how many altogether?' Together they counted to 20 and back, with most joining in. Through some practical activities such as using coloured blocks, they are beginning to be aware of number operations. The more able identify written numbers and make a tower with blocks corresponding to that number. Lessons were sometimes formal with frequent reprimands and threats to keep pupils in at playtime. In one lesson concentration waned after pupils sat for 20 minutes on the carpet listening to the teacher and strategies for handling children were lacking.
- 57 Although there is sand and water in the classroom, there were no activities to help children with ideas such as 'full and empty'. There were no number songs and rhymes. There was no freedom such as measuring ingredients for making cakes in their play and no games involving sequence and order in puzzles. There was little development of mental strategies and mathematics language was underdeveloped. Resources for teaching, such as number squares and number lines, were adequate but the lack of direction and enthusiasm made this an unsatisfactory area of learning, where the majority of pupils are not likely to reach the learning outcomes in mathematics by the time they are five.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

- 58 Children talk about themselves as babies at their christening and how they have now grown. They had planted seeds and were observing stems, leaf and roots but were unsure of the function of these parts. They talk about the weather during registration. The role-play area was a garden centre theme, with packets of seed and artificial flowers. During the week only two children were observed rearranging the flowers. With the supply teacher children identified the uses of everyday technology, understanding that many everyday devices respond to signals and commands. They can identify parts of the computer such as the mouse and keyboard. The teaching of the subject in inspection week was limited by the absence of the class teacher.

## **Physical development**

- 59 Children in reception have the appropriate control of their movements as shown during a dance lesson using BBC music and movement dance tape. They move around exploring space in the hall and are well co-ordinated. They can hop on either foot, balance on tiptoes and makes statues. Their wheeled toys are mainly used only in the summer time, so they do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their outdoor physical skills. There is no access to an outdoor area exclusively for under-fives. Their control of pencils is increasing and their attempts at cutting out the shapes of their feet were displayed in the classroom, indicating satisfactory control of the movements needed in the classroom, such as drawing, painting and writing. One boy with special educational needs showed delight at the space in the hall for his movement. However, overall, pupils do not make sufficient progress to reach the goals for five-year-olds in physical development.

## **Creative development**

- 60 Very little creative development was seen during the inspection of exploration of sound, colour, texture, form and space in two and three dimension. None was in evidence apart from a child constructing a Lego aeroplane. There was an easel but no painting was seen. There was evidence from wall displays of prints, which had been made using carrots and a display of children's pictures of their friends. There was a display of musical instruments, a tambourine a drum and triangle. Their dance lesson showed a good response of their imagination in moving to 'the blue balloon'. There was no evidence of their use of tools using a range of materials to communicate feeling and children's unsatisfactory progress in this part of the provision means that they are not on target to reach the nationally recommended goals for children by the time they are five. Their music lesson stopped early for them to put their coats on at the end of the afternoon.
- 61 There is insufficient day to day assessment of the progress of the reception class children and insufficient use in teachers' planning and the insight this would give into their progress.

## **ENGLISH**

- 62 Results of the 1999 national curriculum tests for seven year olds showed that standards in reading were below the national average. This was because the proportion of pupils who attained the higher than expected level 3 was below that expected nationally. Standards in writing were above average when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools attainment in reading and writing was well above average.
- 63 At Key Stage 2 the 1999 level of attainment was below the national average, because the proportion of pupils gaining the levels above those expected of eleven year olds was well below the national average. When compared with similar schools however, attainment was well above average.

- 64 The previous inspection report stated that standards at both key stages were not significantly different from the national average. Following a slight decline in standards at both key stages between 1997 and 1998, there was an improvement in 1999 and the overall improving trend in standards is in line with the national trend. The very effective implementation of the national literacy strategy has led to improved confidence amongst teachers. There has been intensive literacy support from the education authority in the form of extra training. These factors, along with the school's early intervention strategy has helped to maintain the improving trend. As a result of extra teaching support in Key Stage 1 and the ability grouping of pupils in Years 5 and 6 standards in writing seen during the inspection are approaching the national expectation at both key stages, although they are still slightly below average. Standards are average in reading, speaking and listening.
- 65 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils listen attentively and follow instructions closely. They listen to each other carefully during discussion and do not call out or interrupt. Pupils speak clearly when answering questions and read aloud confidently in groups during sessions where a group reads the same text together. When given the frequent opportunities to speak many pupils demonstrate self-assurance. For example, a Year 1 pupil read her homework story aloud for the whole class and in a Year 2 lesson pupils engaged in role play showed good speaking skills when asking and answering questions related to the 'disappearance' of Cinderella. Pupils speak with increasing confidence at Key Stage 2 about a wide range of topics. A group of Year 3 pupils, for example, gave a lively performance of a poem they had written. Older pupils answer questions with increasing clarity. For example Year 5 pupils described clearly, using the correct technical vocabulary, how their moving toys worked during a design and technology lesson.
- 66 By the end of Key Stage 1 standards in reading are in line with the nationally expected levels. Pupils develop a strong interest in books because of the exciting way in which reading is presented to them. In a Year 1 reading lesson the range of reading activities planned and the level of support for all pupils was excellent. Challenging yet purposeful questions brought a lively response from pupils who were very well motivated to continue reading independently. By the end of the key stage less able pupils use pictures and letter sounds effectively to gain meaning, whilst more able pupils read with accuracy and speak enthusiastically about their favourite stories.
- 67 By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are confident and independent readers. They select from a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, including poetry. Pupils read accurately and use expression to convey meaning. They talk about characters and plots of novels they read. Attitudes to reading are positive. Most borrow books regularly from the school and public libraries and recall the novels of authors such as CS Lewis and Jacqueline Wilson. They talk about classics such as the novels of Dickens and Kenneth Graham's 'The Wind in the Willows'. Good links with the local Eltham College are fostered through the summer reading scheme. A significant number of pupils attend the college during a week of the summer holidays to read with students, who feed back strengths and weaknesses to the school. The family literacy project also promotes reading in the school. The project is well attended by parents whose aim is to help and encourage pupils to read at home. The school library and classrooms are well stocked with a suitable range of good quality books. The library books are classified under a simple Dewey system, which enables pupils to practise and improve independent research skills as they progress through the school.
- 68 The current Year 2 class has a high proportion of pupils who are on the school's special needs register. Pupils' language skills are generally poorer than those of the previous cohort. The introduction of the early intervention strategy to counter their language deficit has proved effective. As a result the standard of writing at the end of Key Stage 1 is approaching that expected for their age.

- 69 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils know letter sounds and use these well to spell familiar words correctly. More able pupils spell words such as 'sparkling' or 'sensational' and use them appropriately when writing descriptions. Most pupils write clear and logical sentences and punctuate them with capital letters and full stops. They are aware of speech marks but do not use these consistently. The range of writing includes narrative, poetry and descriptive writing. More able writers begin to extend ideas by using more descriptive language, for example, Year 2 pupils begin their stories with, '*One blustery morning two scruffy boys set off to find a glittery shell*', or depict the movement of a whale by writing that it, '*rolled like a dog in the mud*'.
- 70 At the end of Key Stage 2 pupil attainment is average. The school has adopted effective strategies to improve standards by grouping older pupils by ability. The action has been validated by the progress pupils have made. Writing shows increasing fluency and covers a wider range of purposes, including for example narrative, discursive writing, poetry and note-taking. Pupils record their personal experiences when writing about 'The happiest day of my life' or empathise with war-time evacuees. Writing is becoming more organised and more able pupils set work out in paragraphs. Stories show clearly a beginning, middle and conclusion. Pupils show awareness of the reader by beginning their stories in an interesting way such as, '*Beyond the door lay the most beautiful garden in the world*'. Spelling is generally accurate though some average and less able pupils show a lack of consistency and spell familiar words such as 'beginning' or 'enemy' incorrectly. Pupils are developing legible styles of handwriting. They plan their work and revise and improve their first drafts. For a significant number however, ideas are not fully explored and developed through the use of more adventurous descriptive language, and there is insufficient emphasis on the organisation and presentation of written work. Word processing skills are used effectively to support written work in other areas of the curriculum such as history, geography and science. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout both key stages. The attainment levels of pupils are generally below average when they start school. As a consequence of the high proportion of very good teaching pupils are well motivated and gain new skills and knowledge at a very good pace. They show interest and enthusiasm for what they do. A group of pupils who have special educational needs for example was seen to make very good progress when reading information books to find recipes for making biscuits - an activity which was meaningful to them. In lessons pupils work hard because they enjoy what they do.
- 71 Teaching is very good or outstanding in two thirds of lessons seen and is never less than satisfactory. In the most effective lessons the teachers have very good subject knowledge and use of the literacy strategy is combined with enthusiastic and stimulating teaching; consequently pupils make very good progress in language skills during lessons. In a Year 3 lesson for example the teacher made poetry tremendous fun for the pupils. There was a great deal of laughter and enjoyment without losing sight of the teacher's high expectations which made the pupils want to read the challenging poem by Benjamin Zepaniah until they got it right. Relationships established in these lessons are excellent. Consequently learning takes place in a supportive environment. In a Year 1 lesson the highly effective teaching was supported by very good use of resources which enabled pupils to develop writing skills independently while one group of pupils used the computer to improve their writing, others negotiated over which word cards could be arranged into the best sentences. A group modelled a John Foster poem to write lines such as '*dolphins dancing in a disco*'. Assessment is used very efficiently to record progress and plan the next stage of pupils' learning.
- 72 Teachers set weekly writing targets for groups. In a Year 2 lesson these targets were reviewed by the teacher as pupils completed their writing tasks. Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 plan their lessons well adapting the national literacy strategy to learning needs of the pupils. In a small number of lessons however, the learning outcomes are not clear in the planning, consequently teaching does not focus sufficiently on what pupils will know at the end of the lesson. This was evident in a lesson dealing with formal and informal writing where the pupils were not sure of the differences and their lack of understanding limited the progress they were able to make. Homework is used very effectively to support and extend learning in the classroom.

- 73 Subject management is very good; the co-ordinator is very effective in monitoring and bringing about improvements in standards and there has been a steady improvement since the last inspection. The introduction of the literacy strategy has been highly effective. Under the guidance of the co-ordinator each element of the strategy was trialled and evaluated separately before full implementation. This helped the teachers gain the necessary skills and confidence to move forward in their teaching. A further development is the separation of guided reading from the literacy hour, enabling a stronger emphasis to be placed on writing. This is a positive measure to address the identified weakness in English. Very effective systems for assessment ensure careful monitoring of pupils' progress so that the best opportunities are provided for them. There is a clear plan for development which includes ways of extending pupils' literacy skills through the use of information technology. This has already begun through internet links with other schools.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 74 Pupils' attainment when they start school is below average; by the end of Key Stage 1 it is above the national average. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999, results at the expected Level 2 and above were above the national average; results at the higher level (Level 3) were also above the national average. Using the average point score (where pupils' attainments at all levels are taken into account), overall results were well above the national average. Compared with similar schools the point score results were also well above average.
- 75 Attainment in the current Year 2 where pupils are approaching the end of Key Stage 1 is also above average, though the number of pupils attaining higher levels is a little lower than last year because of the different make-up of the present class - there are fewer higher attaining pupils than there were last year. A major factor in the above average attainment is the standard of work achieved by lower attaining pupils; they receive very good individual support in their special mathematics group, which enables them to reach their highest potential.
- 76 Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of tens and units. They split a two-digit number into tens and units and use this as a good method for mental addition. Lower attaining and average pupils use apparatus with the numbers from 1 to 100 laid out in a square to help them work out mathematical problems effectively and almost all of them know that the quick way of adding ten is to go down one row. Higher attaining pupils perform the addition sums with larger numbers and some of them can visualise numbers mentally, without the aid of a number square. They add amounts of money, including figures in excess of one pound. Pupils recognise right-angles in shapes and around the room and they are beginning to use standard measures for length and time. Higher attaining pupils know how to interpret calibrations on a scale measuring millilitres.
- 77 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests were well below the national average at the expected Level 4 and above, but those at the higher level (Level 5) were above the national average. Taking the average points score, the overall results are broadly in line with national averages and well above the average results of similar schools.
- 78 Attainment in the current Year 6 where pupils are approaching the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with the national average. The successful introduction of the numeracy strategy has meant that pupils' mental skills are developing well. Pupils at all levels of ability are familiar with numbers below zero and the first two columns after the decimal point. In a mental lesson, most pupils counted accurately in intervals of 0.2 from +5.0 to -5.0. Higher attaining pupils use a mixture of mental calculation and jottings to add three numbers, each with two digits after the decimal point, and then find the difference between the total and a higher number. They use paper to perform calculations in all four rules with numbers with at least two decimal places. Most pupils know how to calculate the area of rectangles and they count cubes to find the volume of three-dimensional shapes. Higher attaining pupils use compasses accurately to construct triangles and they measure the interior angles carefully with a protractor. All pupils are familiar with a range of useful Imperial measures and higher attaining pupils convert from one system to another. Pupils collect information and record it in tables and graphs and they are beginning to understand the language of probability.

- 79 Information technology is used regularly in most classes in both key stages; for example, Year 3 pupils collect information about the distribution of coloured sweets in a number of packets and enter the information into a spreadsheet. They are learning how to use the *sum* function and know how to select a graph type.
- 80 The difference in standards of attainment at the end of the two key stages is not a matter of under-achievement in Key Stage 2. On the contrary, the rise in standards in Key Stage 1 is the direct result of the recent initiative to target lower attaining pupils early in their school career. Lower attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught separately in mathematics (and in other subjects); the quality of teaching they receive is excellent and is enabling them to achieve well. This is clear in Years 1 and 2 and also in the current Year 3, who were the first set of children to benefit from this initiative. Year 3 pupils are also very well taught and the standards in this class are above what is expected for children of their age. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 attain lower standards than these younger pupils because the successful strategy for 'early intervention' had not been developed when they were in Key Stage 1; nonetheless, these pupils are well taught and are profiting from well structured numeracy lessons, which are raising their standards, especially in mental arithmetic - a skill which had been under-developed when they were younger. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in both key stages.
- 81 Pupils have very good attitudes to mathematics and they learn very well because of the quality of teaching, which is very good overall. Teachers across the school manage their pupils well to produce an ethos of hard work and self-discipline, where almost all pupils want to learn and make good progress. Teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly and the numeracy strategy is well used. Particularly effective is the use of tips and simple methods in mental arithmetic which is evident in all classes - for example, how to add ten on a number square in Key Stage 1, adding up by starting with the largest number first in Key Stage 2.
- 82 At Key Stage 1, the teaching is excellent overall; for example, the teacher who takes the group of lower attaining pupils knows the levels of prior attainment of each pupil to a minute degree. She also can tell when a child has understood or not, and will never allow a point to be missed because someone's attention has wandered. In a lesson in the main Year 1 class, high expectations of pupils' self-discipline meant that the teacher was confident in allowing the whole class to undertake a variety of timing experiments. Pupils were asked to estimate how many times they could write their name, or skip over a rope, or how many cubes they could assemble in one minute - and then carry out a timed experiment. The level of concentration whilst the minute glass emptied (administered by a pupil in each group) was very high. Pupils recorded their results and compared them with their estimates, then tried to improve their skill of estimating in the next task. This is no small achievement for children aged six.
- 83 At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is very good overall. A strength of the teaching is the good pacing of lessons, allowing time for mental work at the start, group activities to follow and ample time for a fruitful plenary session at the end. Pupils' learning is brought together skilfully and they are enabled to assess how much they have learnt. This was seen in a very good Year 6 lesson, where different strategies for adding up were compared at the end of the lesson. Across the key stage, pupils are always grouped according to the level at which they are working, though there are occasions when the groups do not sit together. This makes it hard for the teacher to make a single point to a whole group at once and also means that pupils are not easily able to discuss their work.
- 84 At the time of the last inspection, standards at both key stages were found to be broadly in line with national averages. This situation has improved and is continuing to improve; standards in Key Stage 1 and in Year 3 are above the national average, and the effective introduction of the numeracy strategy is improving standards in Years 4 to 6. The introduction of the numeracy hour has been well led by the two co-ordinators and they have produced a thorough and appropriate action plan to improve the mathematics provision further. The work of teachers in planning and in the classroom is effectively monitored and there are good procedures for assessment. The regular monitoring of pupils' work is scheduled for development in the school's development plan.

## Science

- 85 In the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, 97 per cent of pupils reached the expected Level 2 or above and this was above the national average of 87 per cent. 16 per cent reached the higher Level 3, which was broadly in line with the national average.
- 86 In the 1999 national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, 74 per cent of pupils reached the expected level 4 or above and of these 18 per cent of pupils reached level 5. Both percentages were below the national average. However, the school's results were above average in comparison to similar schools. Averaged over the four years period 1996-1999, the trend, after a slight dip in 1997, shows a steady upward trend. The standards of pupils' day-to-day work in school is now reaching average levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- 87 The school has made a continuing effort to improve pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding and standards are now continuing to rise. Analysis of test results highlighted weaknesses, which the school is addressing effectively. An example of the youngest pupils' below average standards was highlighted when the co-ordinator took the children on a nature walk to observe plants and most did not know that a tree was a plant.
- 88 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to carry out systematic inquiry, asking questions and using first-hand experience to obtain information. They use information technology skills to collect and store and present information. A Key Stage 1 class of lower achieving pupils were investigating pushing forces, using a hair dryer. They devised an experiment and predicted the outcome. Skilful questioning by the teacher challenged their thinking about producing a stronger force of air. Another Key Stage 1 class looked at changes in materials when they are heated, devising a way to test the effect of heat and recorded experimental findings and drawing conclusions successfully, using their growing scientific knowledge and understanding. Year 2 pupils with special educational needs were successful in looking at the characteristics of different materials, planning their own test and predicting the outcome of their waterproofing experiment, where cotton wool was wrapped in different materials and submerged in water for a time. Key Stage 1 pupils also have a sound knowledge of the importance of a healthy diet and the way simple electrical circuits work. They are able to use tallies to record and graphs to represent their findings.
- 89 In Key Stage 2 most pupils have a sound knowledge of the major topics in science such as magnetism, circuits, the life cycles of living things such as frogs and humans, and the main characteristics of solids, liquids and gases. Year 3 pupils conducted experimental work on forces using an elastic band to propel an object, which greatly heightened the pupils' enjoyment and interest in the subject. Brainstorming of a fair test, predictions, recording results often using information technology to express results in a graphical form are a strong feature of science lessons. Year 6 pupils test the effect of using different numbers of wires in a circuit very effectively to see the effect on the brightness of the bulb. Year 5 made good gains in understanding as they devised a fair test to examine condensation and evaporation, carefully using boiling water and thermometers and observing condensation inside a cling film wrap on which a cube of ice had been rested. Year 6 pupils use revision effectively to reinforce their learning, as when they shared a revision song about the scientific principles of germination, magnets and insulation. At both key stages pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the acquisition of scientific skills, knowledge and understanding.

- 90 Teaching is excellent in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2, and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers plan lessons well to include clear objectives and these are conveyed effectively to pupils so they understand what they have to do and how they are to do it. Lessons are well balanced and include whole class teaching and stimulating activity in which pupils investigate and find things out for themselves. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about what they are doing. They are encouraged to make predictions and decide what objectives and measurements will provide appropriate evidence. Teachers question pupils effectively to assess and extend their understanding of cause and effect. Pupils respond well in discussion and teachers emphasise correct use of scientific vocabulary. Teachers manage pupils well with good humour; work is matched to pupils' needs so that their interest is maintained and they are able to achieve success. Standards of presentation of written work vary considerably and often are poor. Resources are adequate, well organised and stored efficiently. More books are needed for pupils' own research. Information technology is used well to support learning.
- 91 The co-ordinator provides very good leadership. She also runs an interesting wild area club, which stimulates pupils' interests in the natural world. Students from a local college assist in this work. Residential educational visits effectively enhance pupils' scientific understanding.

## **ART**

- 92 At both key stages standards in art are above average and pupils make good progress as they move through the school. There have been improvements since the previous inspection in the standards of work and in the quality of teaching.
- 93 At Key Stage 1 pupils work with a wide range of materials including paint, pastel and fabrics. They plan their own work and select carefully from a range of materials those which they need. Year 1 pupils for example explored their animal theme by using fabrics for their collage. They used materials imaginatively, after first drawing their animals, to produce colourful work. Some made frames from card to finish their pictures well. Year 2 pupils developed their flower theme by translating their own pastel drawings of poppies and anemones into attractive fabric designs. They cut and shaped materials accurately and took great care to produce work of a very good standard for their age.
- 94 At Key Stage 2 pupils develop a good range of drawing skills. Year 4 pupils showed good awareness of line and tone when drawing and shading a selection of objects. In that lesson they used sketch books well to remind themselves of techniques for shading which they had practised earlier. In Year 5 pupils used colour very effectively in the work they did in response to music. Their work was then developed into their designs for compact disc (CD) covers. The works of well known artists such as Cezanne, Van Gogh and LS Lowry are used well to stimulate and develop ideas. The enjoyment which Year 2 pupils gained from the story of the Ice Giant is reflected very well in their attractively displayed models. Very good work resulting from a project sponsored by an international oil company is displayed. Pupils worked with an artist in residence to design and create a series of flags depicting the country of Nepal.
- 95 The quality of teaching is very good. It is excellent in Key Stage 1 and never less than very good in all lessons. This has a direct impact on the high standards pupils achieve. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and use this very well to create interesting and purposeful activities. Very good use is made of sketch books in Key Stage 2 to plan work and to practice skills and techniques. In Key Stage 1 work is developed from original pieces created by the pupils. Pupils work with a wide range of good resources which are appropriate to the task. Younger pupils are encouraged to select their own resources to suit the purpose of their work. Pupils' excellent attitudes to work and their behaviour are as a direct consequence of the excellent relationships established by the teacher. Pupils work happily in a secure supportive environment. Teachers plan lessons very well, making sure there is sufficient time for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work. In a Year 4 lesson the teacher encouraged the pupils to walk around the classroom to view one another's work and share successes and difficulties which had been encountered.

- 96 The subject is very effectively led and managed by the co-ordinator. Since the previous inspection a new scheme of work has been developed and planning is monitored to ensure art is now consistently taught. Work samples are kept which reflect the standards and range of work, but these are not annotated to identify which skills are developed. Resources for art are very good. The quality and range of resources contributes positively to the high standards of work seen in the school. Pupils' work is very attractively displayed in the public areas of the school. This is a reflection of the value which the school places on the work which they do.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 97 By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 standards reached in design and technology are above average. This is an improvement since the last report when standards were judged to be satisfactory.
- 98 Pupils make good progress throughout the school in their development of design and making skills. National subject guidelines have been suitably adapted as a basis for planning so that there is a systematic approach to the teaching of skills. Very good work was seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils used the computer to design 'Joseph's Coat'. The designs were carefully followed when they made up coats and used coloured fabrics and paint to finish them. In Key Stage 2 there are very good links with science. Year 3 pupils made 'moving monsters' by incorporating a pneumatic system into their models. There was good evaluation of the finished product to find ways of how to improve the models. Year 4 pupils designed their own alarm systems, using electrical circuits while Year 5 developed technical skills well using a cam system in their toys to make figures move. By the end of the key stage pupils use tools competently and safely and demonstrate degrees of accuracy when measuring and cutting materials. These skills were demonstrated well in Year 6 when pupils constructed 'beach shelters' making rigid wooden frames for the basic structure. Pupils design products carefully and designs include materials and methods to be used.
- 99 The quality of teaching in design and technology lessons is very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers set challenging tasks for pupils and expectations are high. Pupils are taught to use tools such as saws and drills correctly and use safety measures such as protective glasses when sawing wood. Technical vocabulary is promoted well and pupils use correct terminology for example when describing features of models such as 'pneumatics' and 'cam'. Very good relationships are established and this creates a good climate in which pupils can evaluate their own and each other's work.
- 100 The subject is managed effectively by the co-ordinator, who monitors teachers' plans carefully. Since the previous inspection a new plan for design technology has been developed, which ensures that pupils have a broad range of experiences in the subject. A particular strength is the emphasis on pupils evaluating their own work and identifying what they could do to improve, which has a positive impact on standards. More resources have been purchased and the school is now well equipped. Samples of pupils' work are kept for assessment purposes but these are not annotated to show which skills were used and how well they were developed.

## **HISTORY and GEOGRAPHY**

- 101 Teachers plan the teaching of geography and history in linked topics. Only one lesson of geography was observed, so it is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. Judgements on standards are supplemented by analysis of pupils' work, displays and teachers' planning. Teaching in history is excellent in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. Teachers' careful planning brings the subject to life for pupils. Geography and history have not been a major focus for development, as the emphasis has been on literacy and numeracy. However, standards have been maintained since the last report and overall, pupils reach the standards expected of pupils of a similar age at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

- 102 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in both subjects. Throughout the school pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of important people and events in history, for example Year 2 pupils know that Mary Seacole came from Jamaica and nursed wounded soldiers in the Crimea. They make sensitive comparisons of the similarities and differences between her life and that of Florence Nightingale and know that looking at Florence's gravestone is a good source for discovering how long she lived. Year 1 pupils act out the roles of poor and rich Victorian children very effectively to give them a better understanding of how the lives of these children differed from each other and how different those times were from today. In Key Stage 2, Year 3 pupils speculate informatively about the origin and purpose of a range of Roman objects, such as clay pots, metal objects and jewellery. In Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of the life of an evacuee in wartime Britain, gaining particular insights from interviewing a governor who lived through the war.
- 103 In geography, by the age of seven, when they are at the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can make simple maps and plans and identify features in their local area, such as Elmstead Woods, roads to school, playgrounds and shops. In Year 4 pupils carry out detailed surveys on what playground activities pupils like and what they would like introduced into the school. They make very good use of mathematics and information technology to present their findings on spreadsheets and then prepare and e.mail to pen pals in America to describe their findings. They gained further insights into geographical aspects of their learning through the arrival of 'Flat Stanley', an imaginary character accompanied by a book and video. He arrived as a cardboard picture from children in America, with the request that they show him around places of interest in London. Pupils take this very seriously and find out a great deal about London in their efforts to ensure that Flat Stanley has a good time. Year 6 pupils gain a sound understanding of the main mountain ranges of the world and carry out effective fieldwork on coastlines on their residential visit to Swanage.
- 104 A key feature of the geography work, which is still in the early stages, but is set to expand and have a major impact, is the school's involvement in the Comenius Project, which currently brings contacts with four European countries. An example of pupils' insight into 'living' geography occurred when a pack of information, maps and photographs arrived from pupils in a partner school in Portugal. The Comenius work also strengthens the links with history, when pupils took part in a study of the Globe Theatre and sent their findings to schools in other countries. It has the effect of broadening pupils' horizons far beyond their immediate neighbourhood. The new Virtual Action Zone, which is at the very start of its life, will bring pupils into contact with information from all over the world, and is well placed to improve pupils' geographical understanding.
- 105 Pupils are keen and interested in both subjects and have very good attitudes to learning. This has a very positive impact on the progress they make.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 106 Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now average across all strands of the subject by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In the last few years there have been many opportunities for staff training and this has boosted the confidence of staff, which in turn has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) in both key stages.

- 107 The use of (ICT) in real world applications in everyday life has been a focus of enthusiastic development. The school has recently become involved in the exciting South East England Virtual Education Action Zone development 2000-2003. It is expected that staff and pupils will be involved in video conferencing and information technology communications between schools, not only in this country but also worldwide. The provision for information technology (ICT) was boosted considerably in the week before the inspection by the setting up of a new information technology suite, with 17 additional computers, so that a whole class can learn skills at the same time. Even in these early days this is having a dramatic impact on pupils' interest and achievement, as in one Year 4 lesson where all the pupils were completely engrossed in transferring the information they had gained on a survey of the whole school's preferences for playground activities from a spreadsheet into a series of piecharts. They made rapid gains in knowledge and understanding of information technology because they were so keen to find out how to present their own surveys in different forms. This is only one example of the way pupils use ICT to communicate and handle information sensibly and effectively. In an excellent Year 1 lesson pupils used a robot toy, called a Roamer, competently, where it was programmed to move to the pupils' command. Another Key Stage 1 special needs group designed a coat of many colours for Joseph in their religious education lesson, using the flood fill to colour in. ICT is used effectively to support learning in all subjects, for example in geography where pupils present their playground survey in the form of spreadsheets and pie charts and in English and history where they prepare written accounts of their study of the Globe theatre.
- 108 Another ICT initiative in which the school has established successful communication links with other countries is the Comenius Project. This is a link between schools in Portugal, France, Germany, Italy and the UK. Scanned work has been sent and received from the European countries. Work on Greenwich, the Observatory, Cutty Sark, National Maritime Museum and Thames barrier has been sent to the link schools. In response, Pinhal Novo, Portugal replied that, 'we can learn about each one of your countries and learn more about our own buildings'.
- 109 The third ICT initiative being developed is the America Club in which pupils in Key Stage 2 have established e-mail links with a similar school in the USA. 'Flat Stanley', an imaginary character, arrived during the inspection, causing great excitement. These initiatives have raised the profile of ICT within the school and had an impact on the children's learning, for example their fluency in basic operations using keyboard and mouse. These are being built up in weekly lessons.
- 110 The teaching in ICT is very good. Teachers have developed their skills through regular training and as a result are confident and competent in using and teaching pupils about the new technology. This has a very positive impact on the good progress that pupils of all abilities make, as when one boy, who was a slower learner in some subjects, was able to demonstrate his knowledge and expertise to others in the class. Teachers support the special extra classes to boost pupils' skills, using the 'Revise Wise' programme very effectively in preparation for national tests in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' excellent management of the pupils means that, even in large classes of excited children using the 17 computers, pupils stay focused on what they are learning. This has a direct impact on their progress and the standards they achieve and means that they demonstrate good knowledge of keyboard and appropriate mouse control.
- 111 Since the previous report, ICT is now effectively integrated in the schemes and topics undertaken by the classes across the curriculum and is frequently used by pupils with special educational needs. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator, who is excited by the challenges the school faces in the increasing use of ICT. He is trained in network use and now a team of teaching and non-teaching staff has formed a management team. A strength is the recently acquired ICT suite and the co-ordinator keeps a good overview of equipment and software.

## MUSIC

- 112 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with what is expected of seven year olds. At Key Stage 2, because of timetabling arrangements, it was possible to see only one lesson (in Year 3), so no judgement can be made on the level of pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in music as they move through the school.
- 113 Year 1 pupils know how to make long and short sounds using their voices and percussion instruments. They handle instruments with great care and show great self-restraint in picking them up only when it is time to play and putting them down immediately afterwards. Pupils in Year 2 make a clear distinction between loud and soft sounds when playing percussion instruments. This is not so easy with some of the instruments, such as the maracas, and, when one boy had the good idea of rolling the instrument in the palm of his hand to produce a quiet sound, the teacher pointed it out to the class as a good example of thoughtful playing.
- 114 Pupils in both year groups learn about musical notation. Year 1 pupils read a score with symbols for long and short like those in the Morse Code. Year 2 pupils design their own symbols, making the distinction between loud and soft versions by large and small symbols. These are then put together on a board and pupils play whilst the teacher runs a ruler across the score.
- 115 Year 3 pupils show considerable ability to listen carefully to a piece of music; some close their eyes, other put their heads down. They identify features of the music, such as volume or speed, which the composer used to portray particular moments in a storm. They then compose musical pictures of their own in groups and write their own symbols for each player. They are just beginning to understand that a musical score can show what several different players are to do at the same time.
- 116 The quality of singing in assemblies varies greatly and depends very much on the song or hymn chosen. In the Friday hymn practice, singing was enthusiastic and clear, with good distinctions made between loud and soft passages. At other times, the melody line is not always clear. Teachers missed the opportunity in the hymn practice to improve the singing still further by making specific musical points or rehearsing individual phrases.
- 117 The overall quality of teaching is very good, with the lessons seen ranging from excellent to good. The level of attainment of pupils in this subject depends very much on the musical expertise of the teacher, a point made at the time of the last inspection. It was observed then that "pupils' musical skills vary in accordance with the appropriateness of the organisation and teaching of the class." Since then, the scheme of work has been consistently adopted in all classes and teachers' subject knowledge is now good overall. All the teaching seen was at least good; nonetheless, where it is better still, pupils achieve above expectations. In Year 1, where the teaching is excellent, the pupils performed together with exceptional skill. All knew how to play their instrument, they kept together even over a succession of quick, short notes, and they all put their instruments down and folded their arms in unison at the end. In Year 3, pupils co-operated very well in group compositions, experimenting with sounds and discussing their effects. The teacher referred them to previous work on how some percussion instruments make a single sound, like a triangle, but others can produce several, like a tambourine, and pupils used this knowledge in making their sound pictures.
- 118 A small number of pupils receive instrumental tuition on the violin and piano from peripatetic teachers. The quality of teaching on the violin is very good and pupils enjoy this special experience. Piano lessons were not taking place during the inspection. The leadership of the subject is good and resources are very good. Assessments take place, but the approach is not consistent across the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 119 Standards reached in games and gymnastics at the end of both key stages are above average. There is a broad physical education curriculum that includes gymnastics, dance, games and swimming. A strength is the good range of out of school sports clubs through which pupils improve their skills in soccer, netball, hockey and cricket. Progress in cricket skills is very good owing to the particular expertise of a visiting cricket coach. Swimming provision is not a strong feature of the curriculum. Year 5 pupils attend swimming lessons for one term only. Most pupils succeed in swimming 25 metres unaided but there are no opportunities to develop skills beyond that.
- 120 Pupils at Key Stage 1 develop good gymnastics skills. They show good levels of stamina and agility and good awareness of others in the space around them. Pupils show good control of body movements and hold positions of stillness when balancing on different parts of their bodies. Pupils link movements well to compose sequences, for example one pupil moved easily from a straddle position into a cartwheel, demonstrating good balance and use of strength. At Key Stage 2 pupils use apparatus confidently to build on earlier skills. For example Year 4 pupils synchronise their movements when combining floor and apparatus work to perform challenging sequences which involve transferring body weight and holding a range of balance positions.
- 121 Pupils develop good games skills. Younger pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 demonstrate good hand-eye co-ordination when striking a ball or controlling it with a bat. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are competent in a range of field sports. Particularly good basketball skills were seen in one lesson. Pupils controlled the ball with either hand while changing direction and speed and used different techniques when passing. They demonstrate a good sense of fair play.
- 122 Competitive sports are played against local schools. Teams enter tournaments for soccer, netball and hockey.
- 123 Teaching is very good throughout the school. All lessons are well planned and concentrate well on skills' development. Teachers challenge pupils to improve their performance by setting individual targets within the lesson, for example Year 3 pupils had to strike the ball cleanly a given number of times. Very good relationships are established and the resulting secure atmosphere enables pupils to work without inhibition to improve their skills, which they do very effectively. Teachers demonstration techniques clearly and this enables pupils to approach their work confidently and enhances their performance.
- 124 The subject is managed well and the co-ordinator provides clear and helpful support for other teachers. There are very good resources and these are used effectively. Since the previous inspection the school has maintained the range of extra curricular sports and the level of coaching. There are improvements in planning, so that pupils now develop skills systematically as they move from year to year, and the quality of teaching.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

- 125 Pupils are meeting the standards of the locally agreed syllabus at both key stages. Throughout the school pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in understanding the values, beliefs and traditions of not only the Christian faith but also those of other world faiths. Their knowledge and understanding is better than their written work, which is sometimes rather sketchy and not sufficiently well presented. The quality of pupils' learning in both key stages is very good, partly because of their interest in learning and partly due to the very good teaching they receive, which rises to excellent teaching in Key Stage 1.

- 126 In Key Stage 1, pupils' work on their food topic is used well to develop their understanding of the idea of sharing food in the Bible story of the loaves and fishes. Caring for others entails stories of the life of Jesus and other religions. In their study of the family, the Christian belief that everyone is important is the focus in their study. They have a Christingle service before Christmas and visit a Church, which has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of Christian religious festivals.
- 127 In Key Stage 2, pupils gain a satisfactory understanding of the life of Jesus, and address issues such as courage and family life with the emphasis on Judaism. They also study Hinduism and Islam and gain a satisfactory understanding of issues to do with Mohammed, the Koran and the five pillars of wisdom. They gain a sound understanding of religious books and pilgrimage, religious buildings, beliefs, values and attitudes and rites of passage.
- 128 The quality of teaching in religious education is very good. Teachers manage pupils very well and help them make effective links between what they learn in lessons and their everyday lives. In one example of excellent teaching in Year 1, pupils learned about baptism, welcoming people to the Church and the symbol of water for cleansing. The christening candle was lit much to the children's delight and the teacher dealt sensitively with the children's questions about not being christened. The teacher created a comfortable atmosphere in which they were sorry when the lesson ended. All of this had a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- 129 As a result of the good teaching, pupils make good progress in their understanding of the rituals of the Jewish Sabbath with emphasis on target words such as synagogue and Kiddush. A display reminded the pupils of the Passover feast, with several special religious objects from the school's collection used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest. The Ten Commandments were written on the board and the challenge was to translate one into Hebrew from the alphabet given.
- 130 The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. She has a photographic record of the major religious celebrations they have kept in school. The good level of resources are stored systematically according to the four major religions studied.