

INSPECTION REPORT

**NEW ROAD SCHOOL
and NURSERY UNIT**

Chatham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118320

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Perry

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd June 2000

Inspection number: 190393

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bryant Street
Chatham
Kent

Postcode: ME4 5QN

Telephone number: 01634 843084

Fax number: 01634 408208

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Ken Wallace

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Areas of learning for children under five; Physical education; Religious education; Equal opportunities.	What sort of school is it? The schools results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Vivienne Phillips	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Patricia Curtis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; History; Geography.	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Paul Ducker	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Art; English as an additional language.	How well is the school led and managed?
Peter McGregor	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology; Information technology.	
Eugene Symonds	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Music; Special educational needs.	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	PAGE
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	6
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	10
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AND SUBJECTS	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

New Road is a medium-sized, community primary school for boys and girls 3 - 11 years old. It has 273 full-time pupils, and 52 attend part-time in the nursery. Socio-economic data indicate that the circumstances of the families in the area are much less favourable than national averages. There is a high turnover of pupils, averaging about 20 per cent each year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Taken together, pupils' attainment when they start school is well below average. One hundred and sixty-five pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, nine of whom are in the nursery; six pupils have a statement of special educational need. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is well above average. About 20 per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds; many are learning English as an additional language and about half are at the early stages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

New Road is an effective school in many ways. It provides a settled, supportive environment in which pupils make sound progress, despite the learning difficulties that many of them possess. Relationships between all members of the school community are a strength. The teaching is sound overall, and good in many lessons, but there are weaknesses that still need to be addressed. The school recognises that standards of attainment are not high enough, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2, where results in national tests do not match those of schools in similar social circumstances. Nonetheless, the school has a strong, shared commitment to raising standards, and has already taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school is well led by the headteacher, and governors are beginning to play a more active role in planning for school improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Children get a good start to their education in the nursery and reception classes;
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good; as a result, pupils' good attitudes, their good behaviour, and their good relationships with each other and with staff support learning well;
- Good provision for pupils learning English as an additional language ensures that they make good progress;
- The school has a caring approach to all aspects of pupils' welfare;
- The school works hard to build and sustain good links with parents;
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- In some lessons, teaching does not ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable;
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not used and developed well enough in all subjects;
- Pupils do not make enough progress in science, particularly in Key Stage 2;
- Governors are not well informed enough to play their part in improving the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected last in November 1996, New Road was found to be an improving school that provided a sound standard of education. There were, however, significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Since then, the school has made good progress in tackling most of the action points. The quality of teaching has improved considerably and is now sound across the school. Teachers' expertise has improved in music and physical education but still needs strengthening further in a number of subjects. Improved schemes of work have been successfully implemented in most subjects, but procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are still weak in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school now meets the statutory requirements for teaching information technology. Despite these improvements, pupils' attainment has risen only gradually at the end of both key stages. The benefits of better teaching have yet to be fully effective, but the school is well placed to continue raising standards.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E <i>very low</i> E*
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	E	E	E	C	
mathematics	E	E	E	E	
science	D	D	E*	E*	

There is a wide range of attainment amongst the children who join the nursery, but it is well below average overall. Many children have weak personal, social and language skills. Skilful teaching and a wide range of interesting activities enable children to make good progress. Nonetheless, most do not reach the expected standards by the time they join the

reception class. Teaching and learning in the reception class build successfully on the good start made in the nursery. Other children join the class, many of whom have very weak skills, and some of whom have had little or no pre-school education. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, a few children reach the expected standard, but most have skills that are below, and in the case of many well below, those expected of five year olds in all areas of their learning.

In most subjects, pupils make sound progress during Key Stage 1, though many have special educational needs that restrict their learning. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in science because the quality of teaching is weaker than in other subjects and too little emphasis is given to reinforcing pupils' learning. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards of attainment are still well below average. During Key Stage 2, sound progress continues in all subjects except science and religious education, though higher-attaining pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Results achieved in national tests for 11 year olds have been consistently well below average, but those for English and mathematics have shown gradual improvement.

Inspection evidence shows attainment in the current Year 6 to be well below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are weak throughout the school and are not developed consistently in work in other subjects. Attainment in art, music and physical education is close to that expected for pupils' ages, but attainment in all other subjects is well below expectations. In religious education, pupils make unsatisfactory progress during Key Stage 2 because they are seldom required to take their work beyond the factual and apply beliefs and values to their own lives.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are keen to please and ready for work; they enjoy many of the activities, and try their best; some pupils find concentration difficult but try hard to persevere.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons, and very good around the school; pupils know the rules and respond well to the consistent guidance given by all the staff.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good; pupils of all ages and cultures work and play well together; in some lessons, pupils are given too little opportunity to use their initiative.
Attendance	Close to the national average, in a difficult context.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils	Aged under five	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Sound	Sound

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; sound; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Sound' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

Teaching was sound or better in all the lessons seen, which represents a consistent quality of teaching across the school. In 46 per cent of lessons it was good, occasionally very good. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection. Teachers' thorough planning of lessons, their good organisation of learning, and their effective management of pupils' behaviour are strong features. Although there are no significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching, shortcomings in some lessons prevented pupils from making better progress. Teachers' knowledge in some subjects is not secure. Work is not always matched well to the needs of all pupils, particularly the higher attainers, and pupils' learning is sometimes over-directed so they do not have enough time to work independently. Literacy and numeracy skills are not consolidated effectively in other subjects. Many of the pupils have difficulties with learning, so the quality of teaching needs to be consistently good to ensure that they make steady progress. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for children aged under five; sound for other pupils. The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum, but aspects of science and religious education are not covered sufficiently. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not used and developed enough across all subjects of the curriculum. Visits, visitors, and out of school activities enrich the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Sound: the school identifies the needs of these pupils carefully; work is generally well matched to their needs in lessons and they receive good support from adults; targets on some individual education plans are not clear enough.
Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language	Good: these pupils are well integrated and receive good quality additional support, which helps them to make good progress in learning English and sound progress with their work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: provision for pupils' personal development is an important priority, and is supported effectively by good relationships; provision for pupils' moral and social development is good; there is sound provision for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils; Assessment of attainment and progress	The school provides good care and support for its pupils through a range of effective policies and procedures; the assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is sound in English and mathematics, but weaker in other subjects.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school works hard to build effective links with parents, but many parents are not able to support their children's learning well enough.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: the headteacher provides clear and effective leadership for the school, and has been successful in achieving a number of improvements since the last inspection; she provides good support to her colleagues, which gives them confidence to develop their skills; other key staff make a helpful contribution.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is interested, supportive and fulfils its statutory responsibilities; however, governors do not yet have a depth of knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the school that would enable them to play a fuller part in planning for future improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators, has successfully identified and tackled some weaknesses; however, monitoring is not always focused well enough on raising attainment.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are good; prudent financial planning has enabled the school building to be improved.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is well staffed; teachers and support assistants are committed and hard working; the accommodation has been improved recently and is now good; learning resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy going to school and make good progress; • Teaching is good; • The school is approachable if parents have concerns; • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best; • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like more information about the progress their child is making; • Some parents feel that their child does not receive the right amount of homework; • Some parents do not feel that there are enough activities outside lessons.

The great majority of parents are pleased with most aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. Information provided for parents about the progress their children are making is sound, and teachers make themselves available to discuss progress informally. Homework is set in all classes, but some teachers make the expectations clearer than others in children's homework books. The school provides a reasonable range of activities outside lessons, including a number of after-school clubs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. There is a wide range of attainment amongst the children who join the nursery but, overall, attainment is well below average compared with what is expected nationally, particularly in language skills and in personal and social development. Many of the children have special educational needs, and ten places are reserved for children with particular special needs. A significant minority of the children are learning English as an additional language, and though a few of these children are amongst the higher achievers others are at the early stages of language acquisition. Skilful teaching enables children to make good progress in all areas of learning. A wide range of interesting activities builds the children's confidence, and particularly emphasises the development of their language skills. However, by the time children leave the nursery the attainment of most of them is still below that expected in all aspects of their learning. Teaching and learning in the reception class build successfully on the good start made in the nursery. Other children join the class, many of whom have very weak skills, and some of whom have had little or no pre-school education. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, a few children reach the expected standard, but most have skills that are below those expected of five year olds in all areas of their learning, and some have skills that are well below.

2. In the end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 1999, results in reading and writing were well below the national average, but average in comparison with those achieved by schools in similar social circumstances. In mathematics, results were well below the national average, and below average when compared with those of similar schools. Based on teachers' assessments, attainment in science was very low, with less than half of the pupils reaching the expected standard. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 is well below national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

3. Most pupils begin Key Stage 1 with skills that are well below average. In English and mathematics, their achievements during the key stage are sound overall, but test results reflect their low starting points. Results in both subjects have shown a gradual improvement over the last three years. In science, however, pupils do not make enough progress, because the quality of teaching is weaker than in other subjects and too little emphasis is given to reinforcing pupils' learning. Most pupils gather some early scientific knowledge, but they do not develop their skills in experimental and investigative work sufficiently, so their achievements are unsatisfactory overall. Achievements in art and music are good, and Key Stage 1 pupils make sound progress in all other subjects.

4. In the end of Key Stage 2 assessments in 1999, results in English were well below the national average, but average in comparison with those achieved by schools in similar social circumstances. In mathematics, results were well below the national average, and below average when compared with those of similar schools. In both subjects there has been a gradual improvement in results over the last three years, in line with the national trend. In science, however, results were very low when compared with those of all schools and also in

comparison with those of similar schools. Results in science had been much better in 1998. The school recognises that in its concentration on raising attainment in English and mathematics it devoted insufficient time to science. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is still well below national expectations in all three subjects, but higher in science than the 1999 test results indicate.

5. Most pupils start Key Stage 2 with attainment that is well below average, and their achievements during the key stage are sound, overall. Each year group contains a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and the results of national tests do not reflect their achievements. These pupils often make sound, sometimes good, progress in individual lessons, but they do not retain their learning, so progress over time is inconsistent. The relatively high turnover of pupils during Key Stage 2 also depresses results. Information accumulated by the school tracking the progress of those pupils who remained for the whole of Key Stage 2, and took national tests in 1999, shows good progress in English, sound progress in mathematics, but unsatisfactory progress in science. Achievements in art and music continue to be good. Progress is sound in all other subjects, but barely satisfactory in information technology (IT).

6. Pupils with special educational needs make generally sound progress in relation to their initial attainment, and some make good gains, particularly in improving their literacy skills. Progress is variable in lessons. It is best where pupils are given tasks which are well matched to their special needs, and where they have close support from teachers or classroom assistants. In these lessons pupils make measurable learning gains against the targets set for them. In some lessons, however, planning does not take account of their needs, so they make less progress. In some sessions where these pupils are withdrawn for additional support, the teaching tries to replicate too closely the work being completed in the class, rather than focus on pupils' existing achievements and matching work to their needs. As a result, progress is barely satisfactory. Pupils learning English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress throughout the school.

7. Many pupils have weak language skills when they start school, but in Key Stage 1 they begin to express their ideas more fluently. They are able to work in small groups and listen to the contributions of others. In Key Stage 2, pupils speak confidently in their own classrooms, but are less confident when addressing a group. In reading, the majority of Key Stage 1 pupils build upon the sound start made in the nursery and reception classes, using pictures and phonic strategies to help them read new words. By Year 2, a small number of higher-attaining pupils read fluently and with good expression, but a significant minority of pupils still have difficulty with basic skills. In Key Stage 2, most pupils can read texts accurately, and retell the story, but many read mechanically without fluency or intonation. By Year 6, higher attainers read demanding texts with good expression and understanding, but a significant number of pupils still possess weak reading skills. In the early part of Key Stage 1, pupils develop well as independent writers, moving from their own emergent writing to being able to spell some key words with the help of lists and simple dictionaries. By Year 2, many pupils are able to write independently and structure a story satisfactorily. Only a few pupils, however, use capital letters and full stops consistently, spell common words correctly,

and write clearly, using joined-up handwriting. By Year 6, standards in writing have moved closer to national expectations but are still below average. A significant minority of pupils are still insecure in the spelling of familiar words, and the structure of their writing is sometimes unclear and their punctuation erratic. Across the school, pupils' literacy skills are not used and developed enough in other subjects of the curriculum.

8. In mathematics, most Year 2 pupils work confidently with numbers to 20, and a few higher attainers with numbers to 100, though many still find calculations difficult. For example, many pupils were unable to work out pairs of numbers that added up to 20. There are also weaknesses in pupils' understanding of shape, space and measures, with only higher-attaining pupils able to recognise and describe a good range of shapes, and measure accurately. By Year 6, pupils are more confident in their use of number, but most operate at a level which is below that expected for their age. For example, they can find simple percentages of whole numbers, but for many their speed of calculation is limited by an insecure understanding of number facts. Higher-attaining pupils can convert currencies accurately, and represent their findings with the use of graphs. Pupils' numeracy skills are well below average overall. Pupils are given some opportunities to use and develop these skills in other subjects, but this is usually incidental rather than planned.

9. Attainment in science is well below national expectations. Pupils' past work shows that they often make sound progress in lessons, but many fail to make satisfactory progress across the school because they do not retain the information. They gather some factual knowledge, but their skills in the experimental and investigative aspects of the subject are weaker. Year 2 pupils develop sound observational skills. They can describe the changes that take place when mixing ingredients together. A few higher-attaining pupils recognise that there is a sequence to 'finding things out' and planning fair tests. In a lesson on micro-organisms, Year 6 were able to record the results of mould growth under differing conditions and compare the results with their predictions. Pupils' science books, however, showed that understanding of electricity is not at the level expected of pupils at this stage.

10. In art and music, pupils make good progress across the school and reach standards that are close to those expected for their ages. Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum support their achievements. In religious education, pupils make sound progress during Key Stage 1, but unsatisfactory progress during Key Stage 2 because two important strands of the locally Agreed Syllabus are not given enough emphasis. In information technology, pupils are currently making just satisfactory progress and their achievements are barely sound. In physical education, pupils' achievements are sound and many reach standards that are close to those expected for their ages. There are some higher achievers, but also a significant minority with weak physical skills. In design and technology, geography and history, pupils make sound progress, but most do not reach the standards expected for their ages, often owing to weak literacy skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good, as at the last inspection. The great majority of parents say that their children are keen to come to school and, during the inspection, pupils were soon involved happily in morning routines and early activities. In most lessons, responses are good and pupils are willing to learn. They listen carefully, and most are keen to answer questions, though some are rather reticent owing to their weak speaking skills. In a few of the lessons, when work was not matched particularly well to individual strengths and weaknesses, pupils were easily distracted and not very interested in learning. As a result, their behaviour was not as good as in those lessons where teaching had a sharp focus on developing the specific skills pupils lacked. Most pupils are keen to please and ready to work. Occasionally, they become engrossed in what they are doing, as when a nurse talked to younger children about people who help us, while they sat spellbound.

12. Behaviour in and out of lessons is almost always good, in response to the school's successful codes of conduct. In a few lessons, pupils become restless when teachers talk for too long. There are a few instances when this develops into disruptive behaviour, such as talking while the teacher is speaking. There are a few pupils whose individual difficulties make it hard for them to behave well consistently, but staff manage them sensitively and, in the most effective lessons, these pupils try hard to listen and do what is asked. If the task is not clear, or relevant, their behaviour worsens. In the playground, behaviour is usually very good, and in the dining hall it is excellent. This is because of well-established routines and the very positive and productive relationships between adults and children. There is little sign of anti-social behaviour or aggressive play at these times. Bullying is not part of the school culture. When someone reacts badly to what others say or do during a lively game, adults or prefects step in quickly to prevent the situation getting out of hand. Exclusions are used sparingly but appropriately.

13. Pupils who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are well integrated in classes and in the life of the school. Their attitudes are just as positive as those of other pupils, though they lose concentration more easily. A few pupils have special behavioural needs, but these were rarely evident during the inspection.

14. Personal development and relationships are generally of good quality. Pupils play and work together well. Adults and children relate well to each other and often there is real warmth and mutual respect, which create strong relationships, as with the youngest children. There is no special time given regularly in class for pupils to consider the impact of their actions on the feelings of others. This results in a little insensitivity to individual differences from time to time, as when immature boys call more able pupils 'boffins', or make personal comments about people's difficulties and disabilities. In general, most pupils show respect for each other's beliefs and values, and tolerance of those with special educational needs. There is a high degree of racial harmony. Use of the 'friend stop', where children sit on a bench, as at a bus stop, to be collected to join in a game, helps to ensure that no one has to feel left out at playtime. Year 6 pupils enjoy taking responsibility and using initiative as prefects. Younger pupils respond well to the chance to be monitors and do jobs for staff in classrooms. Lessons, however, provide too few opportunities for using initiative and working independently, particularly for the older pupils.

15. As at the last inspection, attendance is satisfactory in a difficult context. Unauthorised absence is above average, and attendance levels are just below average. This is partly because of the number of pupils whose special educational needs result in their missing school for related health reasons and to attend appointments. There are a few extended overseas absences. The school firmly encourages those whose special circumstances lead to higher rates of absence than usual to attend regularly and arrive on time. As expected, the school does not authorise absences which are not explained adequately.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is sound overall. There are strengths in the thoroughness of teachers' planning, their good relationships with pupils, and the way in which they create a calm, productive environment in most lessons. However, pupils do not always make the gains in learning of which they are capable, because the work they are given, and the organisation of the lesson, are not best suited to their needs. In some lessons, teachers' weak knowledge of the subject, or their lack of understanding of pupils' existing skills, prevent them from injecting appropriate challenge into the work.

17. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons observed, which represents a consistent standard across the school. It was good or better in 46 per cent of lessons, and very good in 2 per cent. Thus, although the strengths observed in teaching outweighed the weaknesses, the proportion of good and very good teaching was not as high as that found nationally. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when 29 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. However, the school recognises the need to improve the quality of teaching further, particularly given the learning difficulties that many of the pupils possess. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound overall, and was good in many of the lessons observed. The teaching of science was judged to be sound, but evidence from pupils' work shows that the impact of science teaching is unsatisfactory overall, because pupils do not make enough progress, particularly during Key Stage 2. Teaching of art and music is good and supports pupils' good achievements in these subjects across the school. Teaching of all other subjects is sound.

18. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. It is good where classroom assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups. In most literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers meet the special needs of pupils well, giving them appropriate activities and good support. In a number of lessons, however, tasks were matched too closely to national, age-related guidance, and did not address the needs of the pupils. For example, in a literacy lesson for Years 3 and 4, pupils tried to identify rhyming words when their phonic and reading skills were too weak. Where pupils are withdrawn for extra support, teachers too often attempt to match work to what is being provided for the rest of the class, rather than base their teaching on an assessment of the special needs of the group. In some lessons, pupils with special educational needs complete the same work as others when an easier task would promote better learning. Pupils learning English as an additional language receive skilful support, which enables them to take full benefit from teaching. As a result, they make good progress in acquiring English.

19. The quality of teaching in the early years' classes is good, and staff have high expectations for children's achievement and progress. In the nursery, staff use a very effective pattern of organisation which encourages the children to be independent in planning the tasks they will complete during a session. This creates many opportunities for discussion, developing children's language skills, and ensures that they attempt a good range of work. In reception, the organisation of learning is rather more structured, but literacy and numeracy lessons are well planned to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, and they flow well into independent activities. Whatever the children are doing, staff support and question them skilfully to consolidate and extend their learning. The staff have very good relationships with the children, work well as a team, and adopt a consistent approach which supports children's learning well.

20. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers have a secure knowledge of most subjects of the curriculum. In some lessons, their expertise enriches pupils' learning. For example, in a music lesson for reception and Year 1 pupils, it was the teacher's confident understanding of rhythm and pattern, and her selection of an appropriate song, that enabled all the pupils to improve their performance significantly. In a number of lessons, teachers used their good knowledge to explain new ideas clearly, to lead effective discussions, and to extend pupils' understanding. However, in some mathematics, science, religious education and physical education lessons, weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the subject reduced their ability to match work to pupils' needs, or to extend their learning.

21. Basic skills are generally taught well. Reading is taught methodically, using a structured scheme. In literacy sessions, clear teaching of letter sounds and spelling patterns strengthens pupils' ability in reading and writing. Older pupils are taught the characteristics of different types of texts, as was seen when Year 5 and 6 pupils considered the setting and plot of a fantasy novel. In mathematics, consolidation of pupils' counting and calculating skills is a feature of most lessons. Basic skills in other subjects are often taught well, for example when teachers emphasise the correct technique for holding a tennis racket, or the vocabulary to support an understanding of pollination.

22. Teachers' planning of most lessons is thorough. For example, in a physical education lesson for Year 2 pupils, the teacher had planned the work to the last second, including a warm-up, skills development, practice, a small game, and cool-down. This provided an effective structure for the lesson and kept the pupils active. In the better lessons, teachers ensure that they are clear about what pupils are to learn, and they explain these targets to the class. In some lessons, however, teachers concentrate too much on planning the content, and give too little thought to what pupils will learn. As a result, tasks are not well matched to the needs of the pupils, or the pupils do not fully understand what they are trying to achieve, with the result that they do not make the gains in learning of which they are capable. Some plans do not identify the pacing of the lesson and, as a result, introductions last too long and pupils' interest begins to wane.

23. In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. For example, in a literacy lesson for reception and Year 1, the teacher set clear targets for all the pupils, and constantly reminded them of what they were trying to achieve. As a result, they worked with a high level of concentration and made good gains in learning. In the better lessons, work is well matched to pupils' needs. For example, in a literacy lesson for Years 3 and 4, the teacher provided a range of activities, each supported by a classroom assistant,

which enabled pupils to make good progress, at their own level. In a number of other lessons, however, work was poorly matched to the needs of pupils. Often higher-attaining pupils were not challenged sufficiently, because the work was too easy, or the task was too closed to allow them to extend their own learning. Sometimes lower-attaining pupils were given work that was too hard. Ill-matched tasks were the most common shortcoming in the weaker lessons observed.

24. Most lessons are well organised, and the better teaching employs a good range of methods to promote learning. For example, in a science lesson for Year 5, the teacher began with astute questioning to explore the pupils' understanding of pollination. There was a good mix of explanation by the teacher, pupils working in pairs to observe flowers closely, the drawing of diagrams, and a final summary. Teachers generally explain new concepts clearly and draw out pupils' ideas well through questioning. In some lessons, teachers expect pupils to work independently and to manage their own learning. However, in a number of weaker lessons, the teacher over-directed pupils' work, and there were too few opportunities for the older and higher-attaining pupils to take control of their own learning. In some lessons, because there are many classroom assistants, pupils are too used to relying on support, and this robs them of independence. When pupils are working individually or in groups, teachers and classroom assistants monitor their progress well and support learning by asking questions or encouraging pupils to explain their thinking.

25. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and have good relationships with their classes. They praise good work and behaviour, and pupils respond by listening attentively, concentrating on their work and behaving well. Time was used well in most of the lessons observed, and the better lessons moved at a brisk pace. For example, in a numeracy lesson for Years 3 and 4, rapid-fire mental questions became more challenging, and not a minute was lost as the pupils moved to their group work. The urgency shown by the teacher was transmitted to the pupils, and they worked quickly to complete their tasks. Some teachers use time targets well to inject pace and urgency into pupils' working, giving them five minutes to complete a task, or reminding them that they have only a few minutes left. In weaker teaching, whole-class introductions lasted too long, leaving too little time for the pupils' tasks. Classroom assistants are used very well in many lessons, for example working with a group, or sitting alongside pupils who are learning English as an additional language and explaining the lesson to them. In a few cases, however, they were under-employed during the introduction to the lesson, often listening to the teacher for up to 30 minutes.

26. Most teachers use sound strategies to assess pupils' understanding and to ensure that work is well matched to their prior attainment. They often begin the lesson with a review of previous learning to check understanding. In a good mathematics lesson for Year 1 and 2 pupils, the teacher had modified her plans based on assessments made the previous day and, during the lesson, she constantly adjusted the difficulty of the tasks, based on her observation of pupils' success. In some weaker lessons, however, the teacher did not check the pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding carefully enough.

27. From the very beginning, the school expects pupils to read at home each night, and most do, though parents vary considerably in their support. The school sets an increasing amount of homework as pupils move through the school so that, by Year 6, they are expected to complete an amount that prepares them for secondary school. Where pupils complete work at home, it makes a valuable contribution to the learning at school. Some parents feel that homework is not set consistently in all classes, but inspectors found no evidence to support this view.

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

28. The quality and range of the curriculum for children aged under five is good. In the nursery, staff use a very effective pattern of organisation that encourages the children to be independent by planning the tasks they will complete during a session. In reception, the organisation of learning is rather more structured, but literacy and numeracy lessons are well planned to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, and they flow well in to independent activities. In both classes, well-structured activities and play, and a rich variety of experiences, contribute successfully to each child's all-round development.

29. Throughout the rest of the school, the curriculum is generally broad and balanced, and relevant to the ages, needs and interests of the pupils. It satisfactorily meets the intellectual and physical needs of most pupils, and offers good provision to support their emotional development. The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 meets all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, and those of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

30. In art and music, a rich curriculum enables pupils to make good progress. There are, however, weaknesses in aspects of some subjects. Science has had a lack of emphasis, particularly in Key Stage 2; this has been corrected recently, but it has had an impact on overall standards. Also, not enough time and attention are given to the development of pupils' skills of scientific enquiry. In religious education, the curriculum places too much emphasis on factual knowledge, and pupils' understanding is not extended sufficiently by comparing values and beliefs between religions, and by applying what pupils have learnt to situations in their own lives. At the last inspection, statutory requirements for the teaching of information technology were not being met. This is no longer the case but, as yet, curriculum plans do not enable information technology skills to be used and developed sufficiently within other subjects. The school is aware of these weaknesses and is taking steps to address them through its improvement plan.

31. The curriculum is well planned, with appropriate time allocations for most subjects. There has been a marked improvement since the last inspection, when there were weaknesses in curriculum planning in a number of subjects. Planning for English is good. It is linked to national guidance, and results in detailed plans for lessons, and tasks that usually meet the needs of all pupils. The school has recognised the need to ensure that plans to develop pupils' literacy skills are included in all subjects of the curriculum. There are also strengths in the way in which mathematics is organised, ensuring that pupils cover all aspects of the curriculum. In physical education, which was a particular weakness at the last inspection, detailed schemes of work now provide very good support for teachers and ensure that lessons are planned meticulously.

32. The school has successfully introduced the literacy hour and has evaluated its impact carefully over the last two years. The recommended elements have been successfully incorporated into daily teaching, which enables teachers to focus on pupils of varying prior attainment during the group sessions. However, in other subjects, the development of pupils' literacy skills is given too little emphasis. The school has sustained a good strategy for developing reading skills in Key Stage 1.

33. Lessons to improve pupils' numeracy skills have been carefully introduced throughout the school. Most begin with good opportunities to develop pupils' oral and mental skills, including a range of strategies to develop calculation. Group tasks are usually well matched to pupils' needs, but some tasks are too easy, especially for higher attainers. There are few examples of a wider strategy to develop pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects.

34. The school makes sound provision for the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are quickly identified and given appropriate support. Individual education plans are well constructed, with targets for learning and identified support, but targets are often too broad and have no clearly defined date for achievement. Pupils with special needs receive good support from classroom assistants in most lessons, which enables them to achieve to their potential. Progress is reviewed regularly and parents are invited to contribute to discussions involving their child's progress and attainment. An area of weakness is the low number of pupils who cease to need extra support and are removed from the special needs register. There is good provision for pupils learning English as an additional language. Skilful, bilingual assistants support these pupils in lessons and explain instructions and concepts.

35. Pupils generally have equal access and opportunity within the curriculum, and a particular strength is the way in which a wide range of needs is catered for. However, whilst lower-attaining pupils are well supported, higher attainers are not always challenged sufficiently, often because tasks are too closed and do not give these pupils enough opportunities to take charge of their own learning. The organisation of Key Stage 2 pupils into classes by ability has helped teachers to match work more closely to pupils' prior attainment, but the impact this organisation has on raising standards is yet to be proven. In Years 3 and 4, where one class is completely composed of pupils on the special needs' register, the lack of higher-attaining role models is a weakness. Equally, pupils in this class often have a very high level of adult support when some of the pupils need to develop more independence in their work habits.

36. Good relationships between pupils and teachers provide opportunities for informal coverage of personal and social education issues. Within the curriculum, there is good provision for personal, social and health education, which complements other subjects such as religious education and science. The school has developed sensitive policies for drugs awareness and sex education, which are also integrated into some strands of the science curriculum.

37. The broadly positive picture given of pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the previous inspection report has been maintained. The school fosters pupils' personal development effectively. Provision for moral and social development is better than for the spiritual and cultural strands.

38. Provision for spiritual development is just satisfactory. The best of the assemblies contribute well to pupils' spiritual development because they interest most of the pupils and give time for reflection in a calm, positive setting. On other occasions, however, the themes and presentation are not as well matched to pupils' range of experiences and backgrounds. In lessons such as English and religious education, there are fewer opportunities than usual for pupils to think about people's beliefs and feelings. The emphasis on knowing facts is at the expense of reflecting on what this knowledge means in the everyday lives of the pupils and those of other people. From time to time, a teacher provides pupils with awe-inspiring moments, as when nursery children were fascinated to see inside the broad bean pods they had grown.

39. Support for moral development is good, mainly because of consistent reinforcement of codes of conduct in and out of lessons. Adults set a good example of how to make good choices and do the right thing. Rules are simple, clear, and easy to follow. They are displayed in classrooms and places such as the hall so that everyone knows what sort of behaviour is expected in each setting. Staff and prefects use 'gotchas' well to reward good behaviour and strengthen pupils' understanding of right and wrong.

40. The school encourages social development well. The youngest children are taught how to relate to other people and to take turns, share, and play well together. Everyday routines such as registration and school lunch times help pupils to develop personal and social skills such as sitting quietly and being polite. Playground games give pupils good opportunities to learn about self-discipline and fair play. In many lessons, however, teachers leave little room for pupils to use initiative and organise their own work. The school recognises that pupils' social development is a priority, but provides fewer opportunities than might be expected to help pupils learn to value other people's opinions and express their own. For example, there is no school council, or planned time for children to reflect on the week's events.

41. Provision for cultural development is sound. Music contributes well. Pupils enjoy art but their work is not displayed prominently to support their spiritual and cultural development fully. There are good opportunities within particular lessons and story times for pupils to begin to understand different cultures and customs, as in a science lesson where they tasted and talked about food from around the world. In religious education there are missed opportunities to draw on pupils' own experiences of major world faiths and cultural traditions. Initiatives such as the Bosnian penfriends scheme contribute well to cultural development.

42. Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities. Football, tennis, netball, rounders and computer clubs are popular with the children and are well attended. Recorder groups meet regularly, and the two choirs have contributed to school and community-based concerts and festivals. Additionally, the school has made effective use of national funding to provide a homework and after-school club. These activities receive good support, are well managed, and offer good opportunities for children to enrich their own learning.

43. The school benefits from a number of links with the local community, which make positive contributions to pupils' learning. During the inspection, a nurse opened the 'hospital' in the nursery and the children were fascinated by her talk about such things as taking blood pressure. Representatives from the St John's Ambulance Brigade and the fire brigade have also visited lessons. Local visits to the parish church, gurdwara, and post office also enrich the curriculum. Profitable links exist with initial teacher training providers in Canterbury, and with the Medway Business Partnership.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The good quality of care provided for pupils has been maintained well since the last inspection. Personal and social education was then at an early stage of development but is now much more established. The school gives a high priority to caring for its pupils. Child protection is seen as an important part of this, and the school's arrangements are very good. All aspects of pupils' welfare benefit from a highly effective partnership between the school and the education welfare officer. All staff know their pupils very well, which helps to ensure that personal development is monitored and supported effectively. Daybooks, which record any concerns, are used well as part of this monitoring. Personal support and guidance in and out of lessons are usually good, especially for those pupils with special educational needs.

45. There is a strong, positive approach to managing and encouraging good behaviour, which is monitored and promoted very well and with greater consistency than at the time of the previous inspection. The school makes good efforts to track anti-social behaviour and eliminate bullying, though it is more successful in confronting aggression than dealing with 'name-calling'. This is partly linked to lack of circle time, or similar provision, to consider day-to-day actions, responses, and feelings. The personal, social and health education programme is generally good. It is effective in covering issues such as first aid, and people who help us, but gives less attention to pupils' own experiences and reactions. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good, and this ensures that absence rates are as close as possible to what is expected. Overall, good support is given to pupils' personal development in an atmosphere of care and concern for their well being.

46. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their academic progress are satisfactory overall. The assessment scheme used in the nursery is a good system. It records attainment in all areas of learning and development at three levels and tracks pupils' progress. This system is being extended to include children up to the end of the reception year, which will provide a most comprehensive picture of progress in the early years. The school uses standardised reading tests for Years 2 to 6. The monitoring of reading progress in Key Stage 1 is very thorough. Checklists of pupils' knowledge of letter sounds are used for reception and Years 1 and 2. These checklists are extended throughout the school, if it is thought necessary and of help to the pupils. Each term, whole school tasks take place in English and mathematics. However, the teachers' assessments do not always prove to be accurate when compared with national assessment results. At the end of each topic, usually

each half term, knowledge tests are set in science, mathematics and information technology. Assessments result in individual targets being set for pupils in English and mathematics, but this practice is inconsistent across year groups. Individual target setting is to be extended to science. Records are kept, and work in some subjects is retained in pupils' portfolios. Teachers make sound use of the individual education plans to support the learning of pupils with special education needs.

47. These assessment procedures, and on-going day-to-day classroom assessments, mean that teachers know their pupils well. Recording achievement in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is inconsistent. Using assessments, co-ordinators work with class teachers to modify the curriculum and help set targets, but again this practice is inconsistent across the school. The information is not always used well enough to address weaknesses or to provide challenges for higher-attaining pupils. Nonetheless, procedures for assessment, and the use of the information they yield, have improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. Since the last inspection, the school has continued its efforts to build effective relationships with parents. As a result, most parents now feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. Information for parents has also improved, for example the termly curriculum letters which outline work planned for classes and how parents can help. Parents have positive views of the school and are pleased with many aspects of its work, such as its high expectations, the quality of teaching and the fact that their children enjoy school. Links with parents are generally good. They are effective because the school has been successful in building good relationships with parents to increase their level of involvement in its everyday life. For example, parents have responded well to initiatives such as family literacy programmes. Those taking part have become much more involved in the school's work, for instance as helpers in classrooms or at lunchtime.

49. Parents generally help with reading and homework where they can, but the contribution of many is limited. There are groups of parents who are unable to become involved in the school's work or their children's learning to any significant extent, for reasons such as their own work or domestic circumstances. Parents come into school to support their children whenever possible, such as in class assemblies when awards are made. Attendance at parents' meetings and special needs' reviews is generally good. Nearly all parents have signed the home-school agreement. The impact of parents' involvement on the school's work and in support of their children's learning is satisfactory.

50. The quality of information provided for parents is good, overall, particularly the day-to-day messages and letters home. The school recognises the value of informal contact at the beginning and end of the day, and by telephone, and it makes good efforts to use such contact to complement other forms of communication. A bilingual support assistant is readily available to talk to families in the playground before school, and this is particularly helpful. Information for parents of children in the nursery is usefully displayed in the entrance, alongside collections of photographs showing activities and visits. Formal documents such

as the prospectus and governing body's annual report are useful but are not always written in clear and lively language. Progress reports tell parents more clearly what their children are doing than how well or how quickly they are learning, or exactly what they need to do to improve. Targets are rarely specific. Reporting on progress in the nursery and in English and mathematics is better than in other subjects. Older pupils' contributions to reports are honest and helpful.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher and senior staff provide effective leadership, which ensures that the school provides a good foundation for the education of its pupils. Raising pupils' attainment is an important element of school improvement planning, and it is beginning to manifest itself in close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, which enables the staff to identify and tackle weaknesses. As a result, the leadership and management of the school have been successful in improving the quality of teaching considerably since the last inspection. The staff have established a caring, supportive and ordered environment which ensures that all pupils are equally valued and contribute in their own way to the life of the school. This is one important way in which the school achieves most of its aims, and it is a strength of the school. There is also a shared commitment to improving aspects of the school's work, which is evident in the school improvement plan. The school is aware that, given a clearer focus on raising pupils' attainment, there can be further improvement.

52. The headteacher provides purposeful and effective leadership. In partnership with the senior management team, she has established an effective structure for the management of the school. All staff are encouraged to play a significant part in the management of the school. As a result, the impetus for whole-school improvement is as likely to arise from a review carried out by a curriculum co-ordinator as from a member of the senior management team. Daily administrative routines are well established and adhered to, and staff work together well. The senior management team meets regularly and forms a good basis for regular discussion and decision making, which is a strength of the school. Frequent whole staff and key stage meetings ensure that there is a strong commitment to school improvement. Many curriculum co-ordinators are effective in leading improvements in their subjects, and each has a clear agenda for the future. Those responsible for English and mathematics have been particularly successful in guiding staff through the introduction of strategies to strengthen teaching in literacy and numeracy.

53. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. The co-ordinator plans some of the work for the very effective support assistants who help pupils in classes and small groups. There are weaknesses, however, in the management of individual education plans, which do not address in sufficient detail the processes required to secure success for pupils. The governor responsible for special needs monitors the school's provision and reports to the governing body.

54. Monitoring of all aspects of the school's work is beginning to have an impact on raising pupils' attainment and has had a significant effect in improving the quality of teaching. Evaluating standards of teaching and learning, and putting strategies in place to improve them, has improved since the last inspection. Senior staff observe teaching and

learning in each class termly, and provide verbal and written feedback. An agreed observation format identifies what went well in each lesson, what improvements can be made, and what future targets are needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Records of this monitoring, when compared with the quality of teaching observed during the inspection, show that the strategy has been effective.

55. Although very supportive, governors are not yet well enough informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their involvement in school improvement planning is limited to approval of plans drawn up by the headteacher and her colleagues. Governors do not take a pro-active part in formulating the school improvement plan, and this lack of involvement in the process means that they do not play a full part in the strategic leadership of the school. Governors informally monitor aspects of school management such as the curriculum, finance and personnel matters, through an established pattern of committees. If they do have concerns, governors are not afraid to be critical, but they are also very supportive so the school values their views. All statutory requirements are met.

56. Whole school development planning consists of an extensive school improvement plan. It is cyclical, and reviewed annually, and is drawn up each year in draft form by the headteacher and senior management team in conjunction with the staff. They have identified a number of long-term priorities for school improvement, which are contained in an introduction to the plan. However, there is a lack of detail in relation to these long-term aims, and this makes it difficult to see how they would be achieved. Specific, short-term targets for the current year are clear and linked well to finances and resources. Success criteria, however, are too general to enable the school to be sure that it has reached its targets. Each subject has an action plan to guide developments, but these also lack clear success criteria. Progress on all aspects of school improvement is reviewed regularly, through discussions between the headteacher, the senior management team, and subject co-ordinators.

57. Educational priorities are well supported through financial planning, and systems are flexible enough to ensure that funds are available when unforeseen needs arise. The school has recently completed a building programme which has enhanced provision for pupils. This has been achieved through prudent fiscal management and the use of additional government funding. Appropriate attention is given to implementing national initiatives, and making good use of associated funding. For example, training and effective monitoring programmes have enabled the school to implement national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively. Good use has been made of 'booster' funding to support specific groups of pupils. The school makes good use of new technology for administrative purposes, but has not yet fully developed this aspect to support teaching and learning.

58. The teachers, classroom support staff, and non-teaching staff work well together as a team. Teachers are appropriately qualified to meet the needs of the curriculum. The presence of enthusiastic and experienced support staff, who work closely with the teachers, has a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements, particularly for those with special educational needs. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers are effective and the deputy headteacher acts as mentor to students and newly qualified teachers. Helpful whole school documentation provides new colleagues with information about school policies, rules and routines. All staff have a job description, and a process for teacher appraisal has been established. Current staff development priorities are identified in response to national initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy strategies.

59. The range of accommodation has improved since the last inspection as a result of the addition of new classrooms. Accommodation is good and supports the curriculum effectively, providing a well-maintained setting for pupils to learn and play. Outside areas, which include outdoor play equipment for all age groups, are well laid out. There are grassed and shady areas which allow children to sit and talk or play quiet games, if they prefer to avoid the normal rough and tumble of the playground. This encourages better quality playtime and makes a significant contribution to personal development. Resources for learning are good in most subjects, and at least adequate in all.

60. The school has successfully addressed most of the key issues arising from the last inspection, and pupils' performance in national assessments is beginning to improve. Effective leadership and management and the commitment of the staff give the school a good capacity to achieve further improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. The school provides an environment which is supportive of pupils' learning and development. Overall, this enables pupils to make sound progress, often from low starting points, during their time at the school. Results of national tests for pupils in their final year are well below average in English and mathematics, but improving. Attainment in science is too low. The quality of teaching is sound overall, but there are weaknesses which hold back pupils' progress. Within this context, and to improve the standards of work and the pupils' achievements, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise the standard of teaching, where there are weaknesses, by:
 - * ensuring that there are higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, and that the tasks are appropriately challenging, particularly for higher attainers;
 - * improving teachers' knowledge in the subjects where they are least confident;
 - * ensuring that lessons contain an appropriate balance between teacher-directed activities and opportunities for pupils to take the initiative for their own learning;
 - * using assessment information consistently so that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs;
 - * enabling all teachers to share existing good practice.

(paragraphs: 16-17, 20-27, 87, 94, 111, 119, 123)
- ensure that gains in learning made in literacy and numeracy lessons are consolidated and developed through work in other subjects of the curriculum.

(paragraphs: 7-8, 32, 77, 85)
- raise attainment in science, as planned, by:
 - * ensuring that sufficient curriculum time is devoted to the subject;
 - * improving monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, so that weaknesses are identified and addressed;
 - * ensuring that sufficient emphasis is placed on developing pupils' experimental and investigative skills, alongside their knowledge of science;
 - * strengthening assessment procedures, so that work builds on pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding.

(paragraphs: 2-5, 9, 17, 30, 89-95)
- enable governors to play a more active role in planning for school improvement, by:
 - * providing them with information about standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning, and helping them to interpret it;
 - * being involved more fully in the process of formulating the school improvement plan;
 - * increasing the contact that governors have with teaching and learning in lessons.

(paragraph: 55)

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. Each weakness is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- Improve pupils' achievements in religious education, particularly during Key Stage 2 (*paragraphs: 10, 30, 121-124*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	44	54	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	273
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N / A	139

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N / A	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	156

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	72

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	52
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	45

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
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	24	30	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	15	17	16
	Girls	20	23	20
	Total	35	40	36
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	65 (51)	74 (62)	67 (49)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	10
	Girls	19	17	16
	Total	33	32	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	61 (64)	59 (64)	48 (64)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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	16	16	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	5	4
	Girls	13	9	6
	Total	19	14	10
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	59 (57)	44 (39)	31 (75)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	6
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	17	18	17
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	53 (61)	56 (47)	53 (79)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	29
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	16
Chinese	3
White	220
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	31

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	242

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
--------------------------------	---

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	635865.00
Total expenditure	596707.00
Expenditure per pupil	1925.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	62142.00
Balance carried forward to next year	101300.00

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	325
Number of questionnaires returned	74

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	43	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	58	7	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	49	8	4	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	43	14	8	4
The teaching is good.	51	41	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	38	18	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	45	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	36	16	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	43	46	7	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	47	5	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	35	17	7	7

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

62. The nursery unit and reception class provide the youngest children with a good start to their education. Both are well-organised, lively settings for learning, which enable all the children to make good progress. The staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn best. They devise a wide range of interesting activities, constantly building the children's confidence, and particularly emphasising the development of their language skills. The children are very happy and secure during their first years at the school.

63. The nursery has places for 52 three and four year olds, attending on a part-time basis, including ten designated for children who require extra support. Children join a reception class in either September or January prior to their fifth birthday. This section focuses on the nursery, and the reception class containing the youngest children. Work planned for all these children takes good account of the recommended areas of learning for under fives. The school is strengthening provision for its youngest children by working towards the creation of a Foundation Stage.

64. Children join the nursery with a wide range of skills, but overall attainment is well below average, especially in language skills and in personal and social development. Many of the children have very weak speaking and listening skills, and some have hearing deficits that affects their speech. A significant minority of the children are learning English as an additional language, and though a few of these children are amongst the higher attainers others are at the early stages of language acquisition. Skilful teaching enables children to make good progress in all areas of learning. However, by the time children leave the nursery, the attainment of most of them is still below that expected in all aspects of their learning. Teaching and learning in the reception class build successfully on the good start made in the nursery. Other children join the class, many of whom have very weak skills, and some of whom have had little or no pre-school education. The emphasis of the curriculum changes slightly, with more focused time for literacy and numeracy, but the children are still given good opportunities to learn through play. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, a few children reach the expected standard, but most have skills that are below, and in the case of many well below, those expected of five year olds.

65. The quality of teaching in the early years classes is good, and staff have high expectations for children's achievement and progress. Activities are planned very carefully. In the nursery, staff use a very effective pattern of organisation that encourages the children to be independent in planning the tasks they will complete during a session. This creates many opportunities for discussion, developing children's language skills, and ensures that they attempt a good range of work. In reception, the organisation of learning is rather more structured, but literacy and numeracy lessons are well planned to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, and they flow well in to independent activities. Whatever the children are doing, staff support and question them skilfully to consolidate and extend their learning. Lively story telling, imaginative approaches to physical education, and constant reinforcement of basic skills, such as letter sounds, are all good features of teaching. The staff have very good relationships with the children, which enable them to coax even the most reluctant worker to make an effort. In both classes, the staff work well as a team, and their consistent approach supports children's learning well.

66. Children in both the nursery and reception classes make good progress in their **personal and social development**. Many children join the nursery with poor personal and social skills, often preferring to play alone or still unable to meet their own toileting needs. The staff provide consistent routines and a supportive environment, which encourage all the children to become more independent. A good range of activities develops children's personal and social skills. For example, the children walk to the post office to post their letters, paired with an adult, and this teaches them how to act in a different context. There are many play situations in which they learn to share, take turns, and be adventurous. Some tasks develop children's perseverance and concentration, such as when they threaded pipe cleaners through part of an egg carton to make a 'spider'. In the reception class, most children concentrate for longer periods of time, for example during the first part of numeracy lessons. Most children settle well to activities and co-operate with others. However, about a third of the children are still easily distracted. Most show increasing independence, moving from teacher-directed work to activities of their own choice and locating materials themselves. Children in both classes are generally well behaved, and staff use praise to reinforce good work and sensible behaviour. A few children have particular behaviour difficulties, but staff manage these well. By the age of five, many children are confident learners, but a significant number still lack the expected personal and social skills.

67. A high priority is given to **language and literacy** skills, and children make good progress. Planned and spontaneous discussions encourage children to listen and to talk about their daily experiences. For example, planning and reviewing the activities they pursue is a rich source of conversation. Most children show growing confidence in speaking to one other and to adults, but a significant number are reticent and speak only when spoken to. For example, at a snack time, three of the eight children in a group talked freely about their morning's work, but the teacher needed to persuade the others to talk about their experiences. Children enjoy stories, and many know some letter sounds, but only the highest attainers recognise a few familiar words. Older, higher-attaining children can write their name on an envelope for posting, but most copy from a name card. In the reception class, most children communicate well in small groups in imaginative play, and they show improved listening and speaking skills during literacy sessions. A few are still very quiet in discussion times and need to be encouraged to talk. Most children use a range of letter sounds and picture cues to read simple texts, but many are still at the very early stages of reading. A few higher-attaining children are beginning to read well from the early stages of the reading scheme. About a third of the children are still at the very early stages of mark making, but the rest have begun to write independently.

68. The teaching of **mathematics** is good. Opportunities for counting, sorting and matching are planned effectively within the nursery curriculum. At snack time, children count the beakers and match them to the number of children, sometimes discovering that there are too many or not enough. Most of the older children can count to 10, recognise the numerals, and match one-to-one as they count to eight. In their work, children develop a range of mathematical vocabulary, for example recognising quantities in their sand and water play. Staff encourage children's mathematical development by intervening in their play and by ensuring that children use number in relevant contexts. The children learn number rhymes, songs and counting games, which reinforces their skills. In the reception class, numeracy lessons cater well for the wide range of attainment. Higher attainers can count in twos to ten, and can record the pattern. They have a firm grasp of the order of numbers to ten, and are able to identify the number after eight or before six. Lower attainers are still at the very early stages of matching and counting.

69. A range of interesting topics and good teaching help pupils to make good progress in developing **knowledge and understanding of the world** around them. For example, in the nursery, the children can name a range of 'minibeasts' they have been studying, and higher attainers know that caterpillars change into a cocoon and then a butterfly. Children showed particular enjoyment in using a magnifying glass to examine a range of small creatures. In the garden, the beans the children had planted earlier in the year were beginning to fruit, and the opening of a bean pod caused much excitement. Children are beginning to understand the conditions needed to help plants grow. All children use the computer, and most use the arrow keys and space bar confidently to control simple programs. In reception, children continue to study a range of topics, often linked to subjects. For example, in a geography lesson, the children learnt about different types of transport. Other planned activities enable children to gain some knowledge of past events, celebrations, and the need to look after the environment.

70. Children make sound progress in their **physical development**. The nursery outdoor area offers good facilities for play with wheeled toys and other equipment, and the reception children also use this area. A few of the children lack the co-ordination expected for their ages, but physical skills are better than other aspects of attainment. Both classes have physical education in the hall. A very imaginative dance lesson for the nursery children encouraged them to move like bees, ants and caterpillars, and included a good range of games that kept them active and involved. The reception children improved their control of a large ball in a well-organised games lesson. Staff join in, demonstrate the skills well, and give children the confidence to take part. Many of the children in the nursery have weak manipulative skills, but there are many activities that help them to become more adept at using a range of tools. In reception, many of the children still have weak control of pencils, which hinders their handwriting.

71. Good planning and teaching, including structured role-play, ensure that children make good progress in their **creative development**. Nurse Wendy visited the nursery to open the 'hospital', and this gave the children good opportunities to develop their listening skills, to ask questions, and to learn about the work that nurses do. In their subsequent play, children developed both their social and language skills, looking after the 'patients', performing 'operations', and explaining to adults how instruments such as a stethoscope would be used. Having organised a rich experience for learning, the staff capitalise by intervening skilfully to guide children's play and enrich their language by explaining and questioning. Likewise in the reception class, the 'bus' provided many opportunities for counting pairs of passengers, buying tickets and being the driver. In both classes, children have a range of good opportunities for art and craft. Songs and rhymes are part and parcel of each day, and the children sing enthusiastically and tunefully, learning to use a variety of instruments.

ENGLISH

72. The results of the 1999 national assessments, at the end of both key stages, were well below the national average. In comparison with schools in similar social circumstances, however, a better picture emerges, with results average at the end of both key stages. Key Stage 1 results showed little improvement until last year, when there was a rise in attainment in both reading and writing. The Key Stage 2 results have recovered from a low point in 1997, and have been improving steadily. Inspection evidence shows that current standards are still well below national expectations, but pupils' achievements are satisfactory, considering the very weak language skills that many have when they start school. This is a gradually improving picture.

73. The school works hard to develop speaking and listening skills. Most pupils listen carefully to adults and to each other. In Key Stage 1, pupils are beginning to express interesting ideas and use appropriate vocabulary in different situations. For example, in a reception class, pupils used a range of words when discussing the purpose of a 'bus' that had been set up in the role-play area. Most pupils respond promptly to questions and are keen to show what they know and to share their ideas. They are able to work in small groups and listen to the contributions of others. Pupils in a Year 2 class were able to discuss what skimming and scanning entailed and how they might find out useful information as a group. Pupils become more articulate as they move through the school. Older pupils speak confidently in their own classrooms, following instructions and responding quickly to direct questioning from the teacher. They are less confident when addressing a group. They lack opportunities to take part in improvisation and role-play, which are not developed enough during literacy hour or at other times in the day. Pupils in both key stages have a sound understanding of the technical vocabulary specific to literacy. For example, pupils in Year 2 know the difference between verbs and nouns. Year 6 pupils are able to explain the meaning of plot, character and setting, and to give examples. Most pupils are at ease when talking to adults and visitors to the school.

74. Pupils enjoy reading. The range of books available in school contributes to pupils' eagerness to succeed and to the enjoyment they find in reading. Younger and older pupils alike are keen to talk about their favourite books and authors. By Year 2, most pupils use non-fiction books competently, including contents and index pages. A small number of higher-attaining pupils read fluently, with good expression. The majority of pupils have built upon the sound start made in the nursery and reception classes, using pictures and phonic strategies to help them read new words. The recent introduction of a published scheme has supported this process. Approximately half the pupils are reading at or above the nationally expected level. However, a significant minority of pupils still have difficulty with basic skills such as letter/sound matching and blending, and their progress is slow. In Key Stage 2, most pupils can read texts accurately, and retell the story, but many read mechanically without fluency or intonation. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress. They read demanding texts with good expression and understanding. They are able to use inferential skills to determine meaning. For example, a Year 6 pupil reading 'The Hobbit' used events in the story to explain the meaning of the word 'lamented'. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 remember the books they have read and can retell stories satisfactorily. Although sound progress is made during this key stage, standards of reading are still well below average, with a significant number of pupils possessing weak reading skills.

75. The standard of writing is well below average in Key Stage 1. By Year 2, only a few pupils use capital letters and full stops consistently, spell common words correctly and write clearly, using joined-up handwriting. These pupils are beginning to select more interesting vocabulary and show an awareness of the reader. Pupils experience a range of writing forms. For example, Year 2 pupils have written letters, created their own instructions for making a pumpkin lantern, and written an imaginary diary based on 'The Snowman'. In the early part of the key stage, younger pupils develop well as independent writers, moving from their own emergent writing to being able to spell some key words with the help of lists and simple dictionaries. Steady progress is made towards the end of the key stage, and many pupils are able to write independently and structure a story satisfactorily, though some forget to punctuate, and make mistakes when spelling simple words.

76. In Key Stage 2, pupils experience a range of writing forms, including curriculum vitae, job applications, narrative writing, reports and poetry. Persuasive writing is not developed enough, and opportunities to argue a point effectively are limited. The literacy hour is used satisfactorily in all classes to develop pupils' writing skills, though opportunities for sustained and extended pieces of writing are limited. In Years 5 and 6, pupils begin to use more complex sentences and a wider range of connectives. Good use is made of planning books for re-drafting and making improvements to writing. Finished pieces of work are entered into an individual anthology of which the pupils are particularly proud. Well-focused support for pupils with special needs, throughout the key stage, enables them to make sound progress. Pupils recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and try hard to achieve their individual targets. By Year 6, standards in writing have moved closer to national expectations but are still below average. A significant minority of pupils are still insecure in the spelling of familiar words, the structure of their writing is sometimes unclear, and punctuation is erratic.

77. In a few lessons in subjects other than English, pupils used and developed their literacy skills effectively. For example, in a geography lesson for a Year 3 and 4 class, a strong emphasis on pupils answering questions in complete sentences, and a well-conceived written task, supported the development of literacy skills. However, in many lessons, too much emphasis on teacher explanation and recording based on work sheets deprived pupils of opportunities to use and develop their literacy skills. Teachers' planning does not place enough emphasis on using and developing these skills in all subjects of the curriculum.

78. The quality of teaching is sound overall. It was good in just under half of the lessons observed and never less than satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers share clear learning objectives with pupils, using appropriate language. For example, in a lesson for reception and Year 1 pupils, the teacher asked them to predict what would happen in the story 'Leo and the Wallpaper Jungle'. The purpose of the task was explained very clearly and the pupils were reminded about what they were expected to do at each stage of the lesson. As a consequence, pupils were enthusiastic and able to predict the content of the story. In a lesson for Years 3 and 4, good planning ensured that group activities were well matched to pupils' needs, with lower attainers developing letter recognition, a more able group engaged in handwriting practice, and one group of pupils developing spelling strategies. In a lesson for Years 5 and 6, good relationships gave pupils the confidence to contribute in discussions, and effective questioning extended pupils' answers during work on the book 'Harry Potter – The Philosopher's Stone'.

79. The implementation of the literacy hour is beginning to have a beneficial effect on standards. The English curriculum is planned in detail, with the co-ordinator working with colleagues to identify weaknesses within it. Assessment procedures are sound. Standardised tests are used termly to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, and writing is assessed from work in pupils' books. However, the marking policy is not applied consistently. Some marking recognises pupils' efforts and includes helpful comments on how they might improve their writing. Some marking consists only of simple praise. Teachers track pupils' progress in writing carefully and set targets to meet individual needs. Pupils are aware of what they must do in order to improve their own standards. These measures are beginning to have an effect on raising standards in English.

80. Classroom assistants contribute well to the learning of pupils with special educational needs, who make at least satisfactory progress. Teachers provide them with good planning and helpful guidance. The co-ordinator is a capable member of staff, well able to lead further development of the subject. She has identified priorities for the future and has been given opportunities to monitor quality and standards in other classes and to share best practice. This places the school in a sound position to improve standards further.

MATHEMATICS

81. The results of the 1999 national assessments, for pupils near the end of Key Stage 1, were well below average when compared with those of all schools, and below average compared with those achieved by schools in similar social circumstances. Pupils begin school with very low mathematical ability, and though their achievements during Key Stage 1 are sound overall the test results reflect their low starting points. At the end of Key Stage 2, results were well below the national average, and well below those achieved by similar schools. Nonetheless, results have been improving gradually. Most pupils make satisfactory progress across the school, but there is a high proportion who have special educational needs, and the results of national tests do not reflect their achievements. These pupils often make sound and sometimes good progress in individual lessons, but they do not retain their learning, so progress over time is inconsistent. The relatively high turnover of pupils also depresses results. Information accumulated by the school tracking the progress of those pupils who remained for the whole of Key Stage 2, and took national tests in 1999, shows sound progress was made.

82. Inspection findings show attainment at the end of each key stage to be well below national expectations, owing to the large proportion of lower-attaining pupils. The last inspection judged that attainment was close to national expectations at the end of both key stages, whilst acknowledging that results in national tests were much lower. Attainment now is similar to the last inspection. The recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive influence on pupils' achievements in mathematics, particularly strengthening their mental skills.

83. In Year 2, most pupils work confidently with numbers to 20, and a few higher attainers with numbers to 100, though many still find calculations difficult. Their achievements are often restricted because they do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the basic rules of number to approach problem solving with confidence. For example, many pupils in Year 2 were unable to work out pairs of numbers that added up to 20. They did not understand a variety of strategies the teacher introduced, and this resulted in a significant number of children working inaccurately. Pupils are given daily opportunities to develop these mental skills, but the rate at which they acquire new understanding is slow. There are also weaknesses in pupils' understanding of shape, space and measures, where only higher-attaining pupils can recognise and describe a good range of shapes, and measure accurately.

84. In Key Stage 2, pupils are more confident in their use of number, but most operate at a level which is below that expected for their age. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 know that addition and subtraction are inverse operations, and they can use this knowledge to solve calculations, but they are hampered by a lack of understanding of number and place value. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 can find simple percentages of whole numbers, but for many their speed of calculation is limited by an insecure understanding of number facts. Some lessons are well

planned to offer good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson on money, higher-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 could convert currencies accurately, and represent their findings with graphs. In this lesson, there were challenging opportunities for average and higher-attaining pupils to extend their skills but, generally, provision for higher-attaining pupils is weak.

85. Pupil's numeracy skills are well below average overall. They are given some opportunities to use and develop these skills in other subjects, but this usually incidental rather than planned. In Key Stage 1, pupils counted ingredients in a science lesson, and could use their skills when dealing with grid references in geography. Overall, however, inspection evidence indicates that the use and development of numeracy skills in other subjects is not yet incorporated into planning procedures.

86. Pupils with special educational needs generally make sound progress and are well supported in their learning. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, well-matched tasks and good support from adults enabled low attainers to use their newly acquired multiplication skills to solve problems involving money.

87. The quality of teaching throughout the school is always at least satisfactory and often good. It was good in just over half of the lessons observed, and particularly strong in Key Stage 1. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, where marked weaknesses were noted in Key Stage 2. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a very confident approach to the subject. This ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs, which enables them to make satisfactory gains in learning. Every lesson starts with opportunities to improve mental mathematics skills. Pupils usually respond well to carefully structured and brisk questioning, which supports the development of their basic numeracy skills. In one good lesson observed in Key Stage 1, the class teacher pitched questioning to enable pupils of all abilities to contribute to the session, including higher attainers. The teacher shared with pupils the learning intentions of the lesson so they knew what they were trying to achieve, and explanations were clear. Good use was made of mathematical vocabulary, and the teacher had high expectations of what the pupils could achieve. As a result, the pupils made good gains in learning, and their very good attitudes and behaviour supported their progress. All teachers assess the work of the pupils regularly, which enables the school to provide good levels of support for lower-attaining pupils and those on the register of special needs. Higher-attaining pupils, however, are often not adequately catered for, because tasks are too easy or do not allow pupils to extend their work or thinking. In contrast, a very good mathematics display in Key Stage 2, encouraged pupils to find all the different ways to pay for an item, and this stretched their thinking and revealed some interesting patterns.

88. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is sound, and has contributed to the recent improvement in standards of mathematics. The curriculum is well planned, with a broad range of activities and resources. Teachers' plans have been carefully scrutinised, lessons have been observed, and useful feedback has been given to all teachers. There are good systems in place for teachers to evaluate their own lessons, and this has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching across the school. Frequent monitoring of lessons and careful analysis of assessments of pupils' skills have been used to establish clear targets for improvement. Whilst whole-school assessment procedures are sound, there are still weaknesses in the use of the information to set short-term targets for individuals and groups.

SCIENCE

89. The 1999 end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments showed pupils' attainment to be very low compared with the national average. Only about half of the pupils reached the expected Level 2 of attainment, and none gained the higher Level 3. Compared with those of schools in similar social circumstances the results were also very low. Results have been better over the past four years, but still well below the national average.

90. Many pupils start Key Stage 1 with a knowledge and understanding of the world that is well below average. Pupils' past work shows that they make sound progress in many lessons, but they fail to make satisfactory progress across the key stage because they do not retain the information. Teaching does not consolidate pupils' learning consistently enough. Attainment in the current Year 2 is well below national expectations, and lower than at the last inspection. Nonetheless, pupils develop sound observational skills. When mixing ingredients together they can describe the changes that take place and, in doing so, extend their vocabulary. A few higher-attaining pupils recognise that there is a sequence to 'finding things out' and planning fair tests. Most pupils, however, are confused between obtaining results and drawing conclusions from an experiment. The best achievement is in learning about living things. Pupils are confident when explaining what plants need to enable them to grow and why animals live in particular places. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make sound progress with the support systems provided by the school.

91. Results of the 1999 national assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 were very low in comparison with the national average. No pupils reached the higher Level 5. The results were also very low compared with those achieved by schools in similar social circumstances. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special education needs and all are included in these results. Results were better in the three previous years. The 1999 results have been analysed by the school, weaknesses identified, and plans made to raise standards. In trying to improve attainment in English and mathematics, too little time was devoted to science, but a greater emphasis has been given to the subject this year.

92. Attainment in the current Year 6 is well below national expectations, and much lower than at the last inspection, though in some of the work sound progress was evident. In a lesson about micro-organisms, pupils showed a sound knowledge of food hygiene. They were able to record the results of mould growth under differing conditions and compare the results with their predictions. In Year 3 and 4, many pupils can name protein, carbohydrate and vitamins, and know some of the foods that are sources of these nutrients. Pupils know that a balanced diet can be obtained from foods found in varying cultures. In a Year 5 lesson, some good work was seen in the use of technical language for the accurate naming of the parts of a flower. Pupils' science books and discussion showed that understanding of electricity is not at the level expected for pupils at this stage. Unfinished work on wiring simple circuits indicated that pupils do not understand that a circuit needs to be completed for a bulb to light up. There was some good research work on the planets, which was a subject that obviously interested the pupils.

93. Discussion in science classes indicates that many pupils have a sound understanding of many science concepts, but poor levels of literacy depress the standard of attainment, and particularly performance in tests. Whilst pupils make progress in building their knowledge of science, their skills in experimental and investigative work are much weaker. The most recent teacher assessments indicate an improvement in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2.

94. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching of science was never less than satisfactory. It was good in about a third of lessons. However, evidence from pupils' work shows that the impact of science teaching is unsatisfactory, overall, because pupils do not make enough progress, particularly during Key Stage 2. In the lessons seen there were some weaknesses. Some teaching did not place enough emphasis on accuracy when gathering results, and simple scientific equipment such as measuring cylinders and timers were not used. Pupils were not always given the opportunity to be directly involved in practical work. A good feature in some lessons was the emphasis on teaching technical language, which increased pupils' vocabulary. Too much of the work, however, relies on prepared work sheets, and this does not help to develop pupils' skills in recording results in different ways, such as graphs and a variety of charts. Little use is made of information technology. The food work seen during the inspection made a good contribution to the pupils' health education. In most lessons, classroom assistants give valuable help in science activities. Their searching questions and careful explanations help to raise the standard of attainment. They are well briefed by the teachers.

95. Understandably, the school has placed emphasis on literacy and numeracy within the curriculum. Science now features more prominently in the school improvement plan because the school knows it must raise attainment across the in the subject to be done to raise standards. In particular, work on electricity, light, forces and movement will receive greater emphasis throughout the school, together with a more scientific approach to experimental work. Assessment records are kept and the teachers monitor results. Setting targets for individual pupils is to be the next planned development.

ART

96. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in art and achieve standards that are close to those expected for their ages. Attainment is similar to that at the time of the last inspection. Only three art lessons were observed during this inspection, so judgements are largely based on an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with pupils and staff.

97. Throughout the school, pupils work with a variety of materials, experiment with a range of techniques, learn skills, and focus on different aspects of art, such as line, colour or texture. Children in the nursery have good opportunities to experience painting and drawing. This is extended into Key Stage 1, where they are able to develop ideas, often with good use of imagination. They were using a suitable range of materials and techniques, which include opportunities to work in two and three dimensions. For example, in Year 1, pupils develop printing skills, experimenting with different materials in order to create a printing block. Where links are made with the work of recognised artists, these are used well to explore use of colour, and other techniques, or for imaginative work, as seen in the pupils' paintings based on the work of Monet. Pupils used this artist as their starting point, and observed closely the colours and shapes of water lilies in his paintings. In Key Stage 2, pupils develop ideas in a considered way, with a growing awareness of composition and design possibilities. For example, in a Year 3/4 class, a visiting artist stimulated considerable discussion and debate about how pupils might use collage to represent a seascape. Materials were discussed and what techniques might be used to create a suitable background. In a Year 5/6 class, images of pupils taken by a digital camera have been manipulated through colour changes, shading techniques and image stretching.

98. In the time devoted to art, pupils experience a varied curriculum, and good teaching is evident in planning and the pupils' finished work. A limited number of displays of pupils' work make a positive contribution to creating an attractive environment, and art is used well to enrich other subjects of the curriculum. The work of artists and craftspeople is used effectively to inspire some of the pupils' work. There is a good cultural dimension with links with pupils in Bosnia. A new co-ordinator is in the process of developing the subject, monitoring standards and the use of sketch books in Key Stage 2, and introducing a new scheme of work which will ensure that pupils experience a good range of art in the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. Too little evidence was available to enable a judgement to be made about the standard of pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, examples of past work indicate that standards are below those expected nationally, but pupils' achievements are sound. They design, make and evaluate a range of items, using a good variety of materials and tools. The oldest pupils have made purses for their mothers, designing them and then evaluating the quality. Several different stitches were learnt, and the work was adapted well for low-attaining pupils to ensure that they too were proud of the purses they produced. Hand puppets made by some younger pupils in the key stage are of good quality, showing design strengths as well as skilled use of scissors and needles. The standard of recorded work, however, is of a much lower quality. Work is too often copied out and includes ideas that do not match the prior attainment of the pupils, for example a focus on the word and spelling of 'pneumatics' by pupils with very restricted vocabulary and use of language. Written work has insufficient emphasis on pupils using their own language to describe what they have been doing. Measurements are not often made or recorded. Opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not used well in design and technology. Several of the examples of written work did not have titles, and little was marked critically to help pupils improve further.

100. Evidence on teaching was derived from the quality and range of the products made, and the positive attitudes of the Key Stage 2 pupils in discussions about their work. The evidence indicates that teaching is effective, with strengths in the way pupils have learnt how to follow the technological process. Tasks are well planned. All pupils carry out a design and technology activity each term, following a two-year cycle. This ensures that projects are not repeated in the mixed-age classes, and that all pupils experience the broad range of materials suggested in national guidance. Information technology, however, has so far had little impact upon the subject. Assessment and recording of pupils' achievements and attainment are currently informal and unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to improve the quality of written work, and the subject action plan for design and technology includes a review of pupils' work in the autumn term to assess improvements. This is good practice. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in Key Stage 2, with better planning and a more consistent approach to the subject across classes. Resources are good and the subject is managed well.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

101. Pupils start Key Stage 1 with a knowledge of the world that is well below average, overall. Their work in both these subjects shows that they make sound progress, but standards of attainment continue to be well below average compared with what is expected for pupils' ages. The weak literacy skills of many pupils and the high proportion with special educational needs prevent higher standards being achieved.

102. Progress in lessons seen in geography was sound, but many pupils have difficulty in retaining knowledge, so teachers have to spend time revising previous work before they can go on to teach new facts and skills. In Key Stage 1, pupils are aware of the school environment and can make sensible suggestions for improving it. They are beginning to learn about mapping and routes. Year 1 pupils can give directions for moving about the school, though most pupils are not yet using 'left' and 'right' consistently in their directions. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 can use the index in an atlas to find a seaside place they are to visit. There is too little progress in mapping skills as children move through the school. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 could not find Chatham on the map. Some pupils can name the continents and major cities of the world. Pupils have compared a Surrey village with the town of Chatham and can suggest the main differences between them. There was little geography work to be seen from Years 5 and 6, as extra booster classes in mathematics and English had taken some of the geography time this year.

103. All the teaching seen in geography was satisfactory. Teachers plan interesting activities, but pupils' experience is very limited compared with what is expected for their ages, which impedes achievement. Geography and history are taught alternate half terms, so remembering facts and maintaining skills is difficult for many pupils. No history teaching was seen.

104. Evidence for judging standards in history was gathered by discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work. In Key Stage 1, many pupils can point out differences in domestic and school life 50 years ago and today. They can also recall significant facts about famous people such as Florence Nightingale, and events such as the Great Fire of London. Key Stage 2 history is made relevant and interesting through visits, and the pupils benefit from the first-hand experience. A visit to the British Museum was incorporated into a topic on Ancient Greece. During a Victorian life topic, local history was explored by a visit to Chatham docks. A higher-attaining pupil had pursued a topic on Henry VIII, presented it well, and included a bibliography to back up the research.

105. The co-ordinators for both these subjects provide good leadership and have made plans for the changes in the curriculum that take place in the next academic year. Teachers know the pupils well and are aware of their attainment, though there is no consistent assessment and recording of attainment and progress in these subjects.

106. At the last inspection, geography teaching was reported to be poor and more resources were needed. Teaching has improved and resources have increased to aid learning in this subject. There is limited use of information and communication technology in both history and geography.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

107. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are well below average. Pupils are currently making just satisfactory progress and their achievements are barely sound. At the time of the inspection, however, a sixteen-station network of computers was being installed into a new computer room, and a computer manager with technical and teaching skills is in post to ensure that maximum use is made of this excellent facility. All classes of pupils aged five and older are being timetabled to use these machines each week. A good scheme of work has been prepared to help ensure steady and progressive development of skills.

108. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when the National Curriculum was not effectively implemented and resources were barely sufficient. In several classes, computers are now being used in a range of subjects, including literacy and numeracy lessons. Information technology skills are developing well, in some pupils from a low starting point.

109. In Year 2, higher attainers are confident in the use of the keyboard and mouse, using word processing skills such as font style and size changes, and they can save and print work. Few pupils are of this standard, however, and most are insecure without adult support. CD-ROMs are beginning to be used as a learning resource, though most pupils cannot navigate confidently around screen displays. Programmable vehicles are used, and pupils are learning to estimate and control their movement, though their use is not yet consistent.

110. In Year 6, some pupils can use the Internet, albeit with very restricted access, and are aware of its potential as a learning tool. A small amount of control work has been carried out with the use of programmable vehicles, but sensors are not yet used in science experiments. Word processing skills are sound, and high attainers know how to incorporate images into their work. Effective use has been made of the school's digital camera. Database work has been carried out and information displayed through various charts and graphs. During the inspection, two Year 6 pupils made a video of a class assembly, showing good understanding of the value of modern technology. These examples indicate the range and level of work carried out by pupils, but progress is much greater in some classes than others, depending upon staff expertise and the quality of the information technology resources available. In one class, three quite different and relatively old machines were available. These were used well by the pupils, but maintaining and updating software for the machines is an expensive problem for the school. In another class a single modern multi-media machine was available.

111. In Key Stage 1, direct teaching of skills to the whole class is carried out, but in Key Stage 2 individual and group support is the usual form of instruction. In the few lessons observed where information technology was actually taught, as distinct from pupils using the computers for a range of work, teaching was sound. All staff are aware of the importance of information technology skills, and where their own knowledge and understanding of specific skills is weak, such as in the use of databases, they are responding by attending in-service training provided at the school. Sometimes classroom assistants and teachers are too keen to resolve problems, and they carry out the necessary keystrokes or mouse movements, rather than help the pupils to complete the tasks themselves. In the best example of teaching, clear learning objectives were explained to the class, high-attaining pupils demonstrated skills, and others replicated them, learning from their own mistakes.

112. Resources are sound with between one and three computers, with associated printers, in each classroom. The new network means that computer facilities will be very good indeed. The school is investing in modern technology of good quality to ensure that pupils who may not have access to computer facilities and the Internet at home, do have it at school. Associated with the new curriculum plan, a common form of assessment has been introduced which enables staff to record simply what each pupil has achieved. This is good practice. A staff audit of skill levels has enabled the co-ordinator to know whom to help and how, though there is not enough monitoring of the use of the school's information technology resources in classrooms. The subject is effectively managed, both as a subject in its own right and as a cross-curricular skill.

MUSIC

113. At the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is close to that which would be expected for their ages. Given the low levels of skills with which many pupils start school, this represents good achievement. Pupils can sing, play and write music. They respond well in lessons, and listen attentively and with enjoyment. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when teaching and learning in music were judged to have serious weaknesses.

114. Pupils listen, perform and contribute to a variety of music making opportunities in both key stages. They sing tunefully, and know a wide range of songs and hymns. In a lesson for reception and Year 1, pupils clapped rhythms in two parts, sang tunefully, and used untuned and tuned percussion instruments with enjoyment and accuracy. In Key Stage 2, pupils respond to and reflect well upon a range of musical opportunities. These include composition, where children record their own performances using standard and non-standard notation. Behaviour is good, and pupils are encouraged to listen to music in a range of contexts, including assemblies and regular class music lessons.

115. In the lessons seen, teaching was always at least good. Teachers make imaginative use of a commercially produced music scheme, adapting the materials to meet pupils' needs, and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. The school successfully provides a wide range of suitable musical activities. This enables pupils to listen, perform and appraise their own music, whilst the tasks become progressively more challenging as pupils get older. A group of Year 5 and 6 pupils made good use of the expertise of a visiting music specialist to write and perform their own compositions, using a variety of tuned and untuned percussion, including a good selection of keyboards. These opportunities, and the fact that a number of staff have good expertise in music, strengthen the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers are effective in assessing pupils' progress and matching tasks to their needs.

116. The school is adequately resourced, with a range of tuned and untuned percussion, including organs and a range of recorded music. Recorder groups and a choir provide further opportunities to perform music. Pupils are encouraged to listen to a range of music in assemblies, but during the week of inspection opportunities to discuss composers and music from other cultures were not taken. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is good. The co-ordinator has developed a suitable policy and carefully constructed schemes of work. She monitors standards in the subject effectively and has clear targets to promote further improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117. Pupils make satisfactory progress, and their achievements are sound, but overall they reach standards below those expected for their ages. In each year group, there is a significant proportion of pupils who have weak co-ordination and physical skills. Attainment is similar to that found at the last inspection.

118. In the reception class, most pupils follow instructions well as they move in different ways, taking 'giant' steps and 'fairy' steps. They make good use of space, changing speed and direction to add variety to their movements. Higher attainers control a large ball well enough to take part in a series of games, but a significant minority of pupils have weak control, and poor listening skills inhibit their responses. In Year 2, many pupils have sound skills in using a tennis racket to strike a ball with reasonable accuracy, but a significant minority have weaker skills and find it difficult to send the ball to a partner consistently. Pupils' work sociably, in pairs, but many have not yet developed the ability to practise and improve their performance. In Year 4, pupils developing the same skills show much better control, and most can use a racket to strike a ball accurately, with higher attainers ensuring that it travels over a net and reaches their partner so that it can be returned easily. By Year 6, pupils have developed better skills in managing their own physical activity, and they take part in athletics with enthusiasm. For example, they organise their own timing of a shuttle run, trying hard to improve their performance. There are a few higher-attaining pupils, but still a significant minority whose agility and co-ordination are below those expected for their ages. Standards in swimming are below average, and many pupils have little experience of swimming other than in their lessons at school.

119. In the few lessons seen, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory. It was good in two of the four lessons observed. This is an improvement since the last inspection when there were significant weaknesses in teachers' expertise. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly, including a warm up, the development of skills, and a variety of suitable activities. This enables them to organise physical activity effectively, even when they lack confidence. As a result, pupils learn good routines and improve their skills systematically. Teachers give clear instructions, expect pupils to respond promptly, and praise them when they make an effort to improve their performance. Good demonstrations of skills and movements help pupils to understand how they can improve. The better teaching moves at pace and ensures that pupils are kept active for most of the time. A weakness in one lesson seen, however, was that too much time was used in giving instructions, so pupils did not have enough opportunities to perform, practise and improve their skills. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons. They generally channel their enthusiasm well, work sensibly and try hard to improve their performances.

120. The school provides a varied physical education curriculum, though the lack of outdoor and adventurous activities in Key Stage 2 is a weakness. There are a number of extra-curricular sporting activities, which are well attended and much enjoyed by pupils. The hall and hard-play areas provide good facilities for physical activity, but there is no large grassed area for games. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is good. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has worked very hard to support teachers in improving their expertise. The standard of teaching has been improved by a detailed scheme of work, systematic observation of lessons with feedback to teachers, and 'model' lessons to show good practice. There are clear plans for further improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

121. During Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 have a sound factual knowledge of the topics they have covered. For example, they retell a number of well-known Bible stories, such as Joseph and his coat of many colours, or Moses and the flight from Egypt. They know stories about Jesus, such as the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. They understand that some of the stories Jesus told have a deeper meaning, about helping others or forgiveness. Pupils also have a developing knowledge of other religions. They know some of the traditions, festivals and artefacts associated with Judaism, and pupils who are Muslim share experiences from their own lives, which complement this knowledge. There is, however, a large proportion of lower-attaining pupils whose recall and language skills are much weaker, and overall attainment is below that expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus.

122. During Key Stage 2, pupils continue to add to their factual knowledge, but their understanding is not extended sufficiently by comparing values and beliefs between religions, and particularly by applying what they have learnt to situations in their own lives. For example, in a lesson for Year 3 and 4 pupils, the story of Esther included the stand taken by Mordecai in defence of his faith, but pupils did not discuss situations in their own lives where they might need to stand firm. In Year 6, the pupils' study of Sikhism revealed many religious values, but these were not related to how a Sikh might act in a particular situation. Two important strands of the locally Agreed Syllabus are not given enough emphasis, so pupils make unsatisfactory progress overall, particularly the higher attainers who are capable of deeper understanding. Despite this, by Year 6, most pupils have a sound factual knowledge, for example about the Sikh religion they have been studying; indeed, a number of the pupils are practising Sikhs and their experiences are not drawn upon sufficiently. The past work of Year 6 pupils shows a sound coverage of festivals from various faiths, and exploration of some moral issues such as bullying, friendship, and rules within communities. Their attainment matches the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus within a narrow range of factual work, but is well below expectations in a their deeper understanding of values and beliefs. The last inspection judged that attainment reached national expectations throughout the school.

123. In the few lessons seen, the quality of teaching was sound. The factual content of lessons is well planned, and teachers read stories expressively, encouraging pupils' understanding through good questioning. Teachers have good factual knowledge, as seen when pupils in Year 2 discussed the significance of the various foods on the Seder plate for the Jewish festival of Pesach. Teachers use a good range of activities and resources to hold pupils' interest, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. In a lesson for Year 3 and 4 pupils, the pupils sang a song about the story of Esther, and later made shakers called 'graggers', which are a tradition of the Jewish festival of Purim. However, teaching does not include enough opportunities for reflection on the dilemmas and issues that surround religious belief, which are an important feature of many of the stories told. Higher-attaining pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently to apply their growing understanding of values and beliefs to their own lives.

124. The planned curriculum broadly reflects the topics recommended by the Kent Agreed Syllabus, but too little emphasis is placed on pupils evaluating and applying what they learn. The school plans to adopt the new Medway Agreed Syllabus because teachers feel that it has a clearer structure to support learning from religion, as well as learning about religion. At present, the subject makes a sound contribution to pupils' moral and cultural development but is weak in

its contribution to their spiritual development. Good links are made with personal, social and health education, as was evident when a member of St John's Ambulance visited classes in Key Stage 1 and led a very interesting lesson about 'People who help us'. Visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning, such as when pupils in Year 6 visit the local parish church and a Sikh Gurdwara. The school draws effectively on the experiences of the various faith communities represented within the school. For example a special assembly was held to celebrate Diwali. The co-ordinator provides sound management for the subject, has identified the strengths and weaknesses, and has clear plans for improvement.