

INSPECTION REPORT

ALLINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118855

Headteacher: Mr D Phillips

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill
3162

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th March 2000

Inspection number: 191349

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hildenborough Crescent Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME16 0PG
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss J Dolton
Date of previous inspection:	27 th - 30 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Philip J H O'Neill	Registered inspector	Physical education	Information about the school, standards, teaching, leadership and management, school improvement.
John Brasier	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour, provision for the care of the pupils, partnership with parents.
Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English, equal opportunities	Curricular provision
Christine Canniff	Team inspector	Mathematics, art, music, special educational needs	
Pat Ryder	Team inspector	Science, history, provision for the under-fives, English as an additional language.	
Douglas Springate	Team inspector	Information technology, design and technology, geography, religious education.	

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Allington Primary School is a mixed primary school of average size situated on the outskirts of Maidstone. The school moved from grant-maintained to foundation status in September 1999. The single-storey buildings are about thirty years old, surrounded by extensive playing fields. The school is located in a residential area of low-level owner-occupied houses, varying from terraced to detached. Children come from a variety of social backgrounds; less than one per cent claims eligibility for free school meals. There are 263 pupils on roll aged between four and 11 years. At the time of the inspection there were 20 pupils under five years of age. Pupils are taught in ten classes, of which four are mixed-age classes. Five per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; three pupils speak English as an additional language. Thirteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs and four pupils have statements of special need. The vast majority of pupils have pre-school playgroup experience; pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The pupils achieve high standards in most aspects of their education. They experience a high proportion of very good teaching. The school is very well managed and uses its resources and funding very effectively. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in English, mathematics and science is good. Pupils' reading skills are particularly good.
- Overall teaching is very good.
- The pupils enjoy school and are keen learners.
- The pupils have very good social skills and are very sensitive to the needs of others.
- The headteacher, with the support of governors, staff, parents and the wider community has established an ethos that supports learning and effective teaching.

What could be improved

This is a very effective school. There are no significant weaknesses.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The developments undertaken since the last inspection in January 1997 have led to many improvements. Standards of attainment are now much higher. The monitoring of subjects is more effective, as is the documentation to support the work of the teachers. Recent appointments have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. The needs of pupils with different levels of attainment, including those of the pupils with special needs and the highest-attaining pupils, are more effectively addressed. The school is in a strong position to continue to improve the quality of teaching and the management of subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	B	A	B	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	C	A	A	A	
Science	D	B	B	C	

Most of the five year-olds in the two reception classes achieve beyond the standards expected for their age in all aspects of learning. Seven year-olds reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. By the age of 11, standards in mathematics are well above average; in English and science standards are above average. These standards are confirmed by the quality of work seen during the inspection. Overall standards have been steadily improving. Realistic and challenging targets for attainment are set and met.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy learning and are eager to improve the quality of their work. They show a high degree of responsibility and enthusiasm in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well. They are highly sensitive, in their play, to the needs of other pupils. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are willing to take responsibility in lessons and around the school. They use their initiative and anticipate what needs to be done, for example, to prepare for assembly. The older pupils are confident in talking about the school to visitors.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good and is a highly significant factor in the standards of attainment reached and in the pupils' enthusiastic response to learning. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 1; it is good in Key Stage 2, with a high proportion of lessons where it is very good. There is a measure of excellent teaching in this key stage. The teaching of the pupils who are under five is very good in all areas of learning. There was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching, though there are some minor weaknesses in Key Stage 2.

Of the lessons seen in the Reception classes, all were either very good or excellent. Of those seen in Key Stage 1 all were at least satisfactory; 94 per cent were good or better and half were very good. In

Key Stage 2, again, all teaching seen was at least satisfactory, with 78 per cent good or better, 34 per cent very good or better and six per cent excellent. The great strengths of teaching, in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, lie in the quality of the teachers' planning, the skilful use of questioning, the brisk pace sustained through lessons, the clarity of explanations, the effective management of behaviour and the good opportunities offered to pupils to reflect on and evaluate their own work. A further strength, evident in both the literacy hour and the numeracy lesson, is the use made of the plenary session at the end of lessons to consolidate what the pupils learn in lessons. These strengths are more consistently evident in Key Stage 1. Teaching is occasionally weakened in Key Stage 2 by lapses in sustaining clear classroom routines and unclear explanations of some aspects of the tasks. There are also occasional minor weaknesses in the management of group work, through insufficient emphasis on clear feedback to individual pupils on how well they are achieving and on how they might improve their work.

The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics, information communications technology, design and technology, geography, French and physical education is very good mainly because of the clarity with which the teachers present what is to be learned. Teaching is good in science, religious education, art, history and music. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. Standards are improving in these areas because of an effective programme of staff development. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught through the provision of sufficiently challenging tasks and the judicious use of praise. This leads to very good progress in their work. This is also true of the few pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment are very quick to learn. They make a big effort to apply their minds to their work even when experiencing difficulties. They are generally clear about how well they are achieving and are eager to find out how to improve their work. The well-established culture of learning in the school is a key factor in the quality of the pupils' work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and relevant and caters well for the full range of pupils' interests and levels of attainment. There is a very good range of clubs and other extracurricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils are well provided for through very good support in lessons and when withdrawn from lessons for special help.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils involved are fluent speakers of English. The school meets their needs very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strongly supported by some very effective assemblies and the excellent role models provided by all the staff. The pupils' response ensures that the school's very good ethos for learning is sustained. There is good provision for the pupils' cultural development through the experience of art, music and poetry. Pupils are well prepared to live in a multicultural society and are aware of the cultural diversity represented in Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils, providing a very safe environment and clear rules of behaviour. It helps pupils to look after themselves. Pupils are known very well by their teachers. The teachers are good at tracking pupils' progress. The school makes every effort to identify pupils who may have special educational needs and to prepare clear education plans for them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is excellently led and managed. The headteacher, supported very effectively by his deputy and senior colleagues, provides very clear direction to its work. Monitoring of lessons and pupils' learning has brought about considerable improvement in these areas in recent years. Staffing, accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well. The school is careful to analyse its costs and to seek the best value in what it spends.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The contribution made by the governors to the management of the school is excellent. This is particularly true of the management of finance where there is a high level of expertise.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a very strong feature. There have been some very well-organised formal evaluations of all aspects of the school. These have provided a very clear focus for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of all staff, of their time, of resources and accommodation. The large area laid to grass is very well used in the provision of sport and games. More recently, the school has rightly concentrated the deployment of resources on the development of literacy and numeracy.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's happy, caring atmosphere • the standards achieved by the pupils • the teachers' high expectations for attainment • the close way in which the school works with parents • the consistent and positive management of behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality and quantity of the work provided for pupils to do at home • the information provided about progress • the quality of support for some areas of learning difficulty • the attainment of the older pupils in the mixed-age classes.

Evidence from the inspection of the school supports the parents' very positive evaluation of what it provides for their children. Inspection evidence does not support the view of some parents that there is insufficient homework. The level of homework provided is appropriate for the pupils' ages and is consistent with government guidelines. The inspectors do not endorse the judgement of some parents that the information they receive on their children's progress is inadequate. What is provided is good; however, it would be made better by consistently providing suggestions about what pupils should do to improve. A few parents have some misgivings about the attainment of the older pupils in mixed-age classes and about the quality of support for some areas of learning difficulty. Inspection findings establish that the school handles the necessary mixed-age classes effectively, selecting the pupils wisely. The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. In all cases observed pupils with specific difficulties in learning received a very good level of special help.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 In the National Curriculum tests for seven year-olds in English in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was well above the national average in reading and writing. The proportions reaching the higher levels in reading and writing were also well above average. In the tests in mathematics, attainment of the expected level and the higher levels was average. The teachers' assessments in English show that a well above average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading and writing; the proportion reaching the higher levels was close to the average in reading and above average in writing. An average proportion of seven year-olds reached the expected Level 2 and the higher levels in science. Girls outperform boys in reading, writing and mathematics, in line with the national picture.
- 2 Taking the average performance of pupils aged seven, standards in relation to all schools were well above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. In relation to schools in similar circumstances, standards are well above average in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. Overall standards of attainment, at this age, have improved since the previous inspection and have been well above average over the last two years. The school has planned and carried out its strategies for the development of literacy and numeracy successfully. The teachers' efforts in this respect are bearing fruit in the steady improvement of standards of literacy and numeracy across the school.
- 3 The inspection of lessons, analysis of work and the sample of pupils' reading, towards the end of Key Stage 1, reveal good standards of speaking and listening. Pupils are encouraged to use a good range of language and to talk and write about the books they read. Pupils read fluently and confidently, reading a wide range of texts for pleasure and for interest. The effective use of reading records has been a significant influence in sustaining very good standards of reading. Pupils attempt a very good range of writing, including poetry. Seven year-olds use legible joined handwriting with well-formed letter shapes. They write imaginatively in different styles and for different purposes. For example, in Year 2, pupils explore the different forms of presentation used for writing poetry and for writing prose. Spelling is improving steadily and is around average for seven year-olds.
- 4 In mathematics, a wide range of attainment is represented in the current Year 2, but standards overall are above average. The regular practice of mental mathematics puts the pupils in a strong position to solve problems mentally and in writing. Pupils apply their number skills to practical settings such as shopping. The work seen in science reveals above average standards, with evidence, for example, of a good understanding of the growth of organisms and of how to conduct a fair test. Seven year-olds reach above average standards in information communications technology and religious education. There are very good standards of work in design and technology and geography. Good standards are achieved, at this stage, in art, music and physical education. Standards in history are satisfactory.

- 5 In the 1999 national tests for 11 year-olds, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was above the national average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science. Standards of attainment at the higher levels were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Boys and girls reached comparable standards. The trend in the school's overall attainment in English, mathematics and science, taken together, is broadly in line with the national trend. Evidence from lessons and work seen confirms a steady improvement in the standards reached by pupils at the end of both key stages. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in English and science is average and well above average in mathematics. In relation to similar schools' attainment of the higher grades, the school's results are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science.

- 6 Evidence from the analysis of work and the observation of lessons, towards the end of Key Stage 2, shows that the older pupils in Year 6 reach above average standards in their work in English and science and well above average standards in mathematics. Pupils' speaking is extended through the good use of literacy across the subjects. Writing also reaches high, and occasionally very high, standards as pupils are encouraged to extend their writing and embrace a wide-ranging vocabulary, particularly in science. Pupils continue to enjoy books and demonstrate a good level of fluency and confidence. Pupils, at this stage, quickly extend their knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of mathematics. The understanding of number operations continues to be emphasised and pupils' use of number is increasingly confident in all aspects of the subject as they move through the key stage. The attainment of 11 year-olds in information communications technology and religious education is above average. Attainment in art, history and music is satisfactory. It is good in design and technology, geography, French and physical education. Achievement in competitive sport and games is good for a school of its size. The great majority of pupils swim confidently and unaided over at least 25 metres before the age of 11. The school sets and meets challenging targets for attainment.

- 7 Children who are under five achieve very good standards in developing language, in early reading, writing and mathematics, in creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The vast majority of pupils should achieve the desirable learning outcomes well before they are five. Many pupils are already exceeding these expectations.

- 8 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. This is due to the quality of support they receive in lessons and the good quality of teaching they receive when withdrawn from lessons for special help. The learning targets in the individual education plans are very well structured. The pupils respond well to the teachers and support staff and work steadily towards achieving their targets. The school's very good initiatives to raise the achievement of the higher-attaining pupils have resulted in some outstanding work, particularly in English and mathematics. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as their peers of the same ages.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 9 The pupils' very good attitudes and values and excellent personal development and relationships are among the very significant strengths of the school. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection, and is a key factor in the quality of the pupils' learning and the levels of attainment reached.
- 10 Pupils enjoy school. They enter into lessons with enthusiasm, for instance, when trying to beat the clock in mental mathematics. They like and respect their teachers, as shown by their many enthusiastic responses to their work. They listen intently in lessons and settle quickly and industriously when given a task. They are keen to answer questions, but are sensitive about taking turns. These very positive attitudes are the result of the calm but firm application of the agreed behaviour policy, the brisk and appropriate pace of most lessons, the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the excellent example set by all adults. A fine example of the brisk pace is the lively song Year 1 pupils sing when moving from their desks to the carpet.
- 11 Behaviour is very good. The pupils move calmly and swiftly about the school, are polite to staff and visitors, and keep the buildings and grounds tidy and in good condition. They look after their own and others' property with care. They behave well at lunchtime and talk sociably to each other. On the playground they respect the rules about where they can play and have much fun with their games and activities, using the equipment provided. There is no evidence of any oppressive behaviour. There have been no exclusions.
- 12 Relationships are excellent. Teachers often know their pupils so well that they know the limits to which they can be extended. Pupils get on well together. They are appreciative of each other's work, even to the extent of spontaneously giving a round of applause. They work well together in pairs or groups and are polite and courteous to each other. They are very considerate to others, for instance, pupils with physical disabilities are included even in the most robust games. Personal development is also excellent. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For instance, older pupils go into the swimming pool with reception pupils to give them confidence and support. They also take part in paired reading, and see that the younger pupils are safe when the pupils walk to church. Pupils make good use of the many opportunities provided for acting independently.
- 13 The children who are under five form secure relationships with one another, with their teachers and the other adults who work with them. They are good at taking turns and in tidying up after their work. Their behaviour is very good. They sustain very good levels of concentration and persevere with their work with considerable enthusiasm. They show a high level of independence, dressing themselves quickly, changing groups between activities in a very orderly way. They are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
- 14 Evidence of the development of pupils' spiritual awareness was seen in many lessons and demonstrated most notably in school assemblies. Spirituality sparkled through every moment of presentation at a whole school assembly by a Reception class. They presented the story of 'The Life Cycle of a Frog' taking the roles of narrator, ducks, tadpoles and Mr Frog. The children shared their sense of mystery as the evolutionary cycle from spawn to tadpole to frog developed concluding with the whole class comment, 'Frogs are amazing.' The stillness and concentration of the audience of older pupils throughout this was palpable.

- 15 Attendance is very good, better than at the last inspection. There is virtually no unauthorised absence. There is very little lateness and lessons start on time. Registers are well maintained.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 16 The overall quality of teaching is very good and has a very clear impact on the standards achieved, on the school's very strong ethos for learning and on the progress made by pupils at all levels of attainment. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 1; it is good in Key Stage 2, with a high proportion of lessons where it is very good. There is a measure of excellent teaching in this key stage. The teaching of the pupils who are under five is very good in all areas of learning. There was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching.
- 17 Of the lessons seen in the Reception classes, all were either very good or excellent. The striking feature of teaching at this stage is the teachers' understanding of the individual pupils' needs and the high expectations for attainment they communicate to the children. The children respond with great enthusiasm to all the activities provided. The attention they give to the details of their work is unusual for their ages. They have been successfully taught to listen and take turns in discussion. The teaching of basic number work is very effective through the use of stimulating activities and through relating counting and simple adding and taking away to their daily lives. Teachers sustain a stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment in which the children's imagination is given free rein. The teaching of dance and simple competitive games is successful in developing the children's fine and gross motor skills. The strong emphasis on listening to one another and on taking turns develops the pupils' social and personal skills, with the consequence that they relate very well together.
- 18 Of the lessons seen in Key Stage 1 all were at least satisfactory; 94 per cent were good or better and half were very good. Of those seen in Key Stage 2, again, all were at least satisfactory, with 78 per cent good or better, 34 per cent very good or better and six per cent excellent. The great strengths of teaching in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 lie in the quality of the teachers' planning which sets out very clearly what the pupils are expected to learn, the skilful use of questioning, the brisk pace sustained through lessons, the clarity of explanations, the effective management of behaviour and the good opportunities offered to pupils to reflect on and evaluate their own work. The latter is particularly effective in extending the range of the pupils' language. A further strength, evident in the literacy hour and the numeracy lesson, is the use made of the plenary session at the end of lessons to consolidate what the pupils learn in lessons. These strengths are more consistently evident in Key Stage 1. Teaching is occasionally weakened in Key Stage 2 by lapses in sustaining clear classroom routines, unclear explanations of some aspects of the tasks and lapses in the management of group work, through insufficient emphasis on clear individual feedback.
- 19 The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics, information communications technology, design and technology, geography, French and physical education is very good. It is good in science, religious education, art, history and music. Very good teaching is revealed in English, for example, in a Year 2 lesson the very good emphasis on the language and structure of poems led pupils to write some very good poetry in the style of those they had studied. They showed real sensitivity to the rhythm and shape of words. Very good teaching of mental mathematics is revealed

through, for example, practising solving money problems by relating them to real life problems. The extensive use of scientific vocabulary strengthens teaching in science and supports the pupils in deepening their understanding. Teaching in religious education is underpinned by a strong commitment to creating opportunities for pupils to reflect on the significance of religious issues in their lives.

- 20 The emphasis in art on allowing pupils to develop their own ideas was evident in a Year 2 lesson when the pupils were studying the work of William Morris. The teacher led the pupils to a good grasp of the main features of the designs of Morris. The pupils, in turn, responded with great interest and produced some imaginative patterns on clay tiles. The very good planning of appropriate resources led to some very good work in a design and technology lesson in Year 3. The teachers' planning for geography lessons involves the use of a good range of resources, including appropriate maps, used to kindle pupils' interest when comparing Maidstone and Paris in a Year 4 and 5 lesson. The success of teaching in French is due, in the main, to the quality of French spoken by the teacher and the emphasis on speaking French throughout the lesson. The well-managed practice of individual skills in physical education leads to greater accuracy in passing and receiving in games.
- 21 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils are sometimes taught as part of the usual classroom programmes, while others are given more specialist teaching. Planning for pupils' learning is very good. Work set in lessons for pupils withdrawn for special help, and for those supported within the classroom, relates closely to the pupils' individual targets. Learning support assistants give good support to their individual charges and, where possible, to others who are experiencing difficulties. Teachers create an atmosphere of trust and encouragement and set high standards. There is close teamwork between the special needs co-ordinator, class teachers and support assistants. Teachers make every effort to provide suitable work and support for all these pupils. The systems of support for pupils with physical disabilities are very good. These pupils are integrated well into all lessons and activities.

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

- 22 All pupils are provided with a very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Equality of access to a wide range of learning opportunities is provided by the school for all its pupils. All statutory requirements are met fully. A particular strength of the school is the good provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills. This is reflected in the school's good results in the most recent National Curriculum tests. Provision for higher-attaining pupils is good through the Academic Club and the many challenging opportunities offered by increasing the demand of activities in lessons.
- 23 Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator keeps meticulous records. Individual education plans are developed in full co-operation with parents and teachers. All pupils on the special educational needs register are monitored regularly to ensure that they are meeting the targets set for them.
- 24 A further strength is the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, which is integrated with the teaching of religious education and the provision of collective worship for the whole-school. A fine example was the whole school assembly led by the Reception class who shared their joy in the wonderful way

that plants and animals grow in the spring. The presentation bore witness to the quality of the school community and the ethos for learning.

- 25 The headteacher and his caring staff provide excellent role models for courteous and considerate behaviour. The pupils' response to this example ensures that the school's very good ethos for learning is sustained. Pupils' moral discernment is developed through opportunities for reflection on the effects of their actions and the actions of others. A good example was seen in a whole-school assembly when pupils were invited to give their opinions on right and wrong behaviour. The pupils responded with some very sensitive and sophisticated answers, showing a high level of moral and social awareness. There is good provision for the pupils' cultural development through their experience of art, music and poetry. They are well prepared to live in a multicultural society and are aware of the cultural diversity represented in Britain.
- 26 The quality and range of learning opportunities for children under five years of age are very good. Teachers introduce elements of the National Curriculum objectives and blend these with the desirable learning outcomes appropriate for pupils under five years.
- 27 In Key Stages 1 and 2 the curriculum is led by the objectives for the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy. The full time allocation is given to these two prime areas of the curriculum. The teaching of science is well addressed. Time is allocated well for the teaching of the other subjects. These are often inter-related with the teaching of literacy, which allows for a good spread of activities planned appropriately to meet the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment. Nationally prepared guidelines are used effectively to ensure that learning objectives are well focused and time is used profitably.
- 28 Cross-curricular skills are developed through mathematics and science as well as the literacy skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing. For example, mathematical skills are deployed in grids and graphs for geography and pupils use measuring, calculating and predicting skills as an integral part of the classroom activities in the science lessons. Literacy skills are employed in role taking and sifting evidence for historical enquiry.
- 29 Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Pupils work co-operatively with others in school and in the activities undertaken outside school. Health education is supported by the science lessons taught at all year levels where life processes and reproduction are studied. Pupils learn about harm caused by inappropriate use of drugs and tobacco.
- 30 The school curriculum is greatly enriched by the many extra-curricular opportunities offered. A wide range of competitive sports and games is provided. Many teachers are involved in this provision and the participation rate by pupils is very good. The school hosts the six-a-side and seven-a-side Area Football tournaments with other local schools, also the Area Netball tournament. Pupils in Year 6 have opportunities to extend the range of sports activities they experience, including outdoor and adventurous activities, on their four day residential visit to the Isle of Wight. Pupils are offered a rich menu of creative arts activities. The descant recorder is taught to all pupils in Year 3, thereafter recorder lessons are available for all pupils who are interested. There is a school choir that regularly takes part in informal concerts for senior citizens. The school takes part in the Maidstone Arts pageant and regular

productions of plays and musicals are staged by pupils in different year groups, for example pupils in Year 6 are preparing for a millennial production.

- 31 There is a full programme of excursions to places of interest. Year 6 visit the Kent Local Life Museum where they practise design and technology skills by building 'buggies'. As part of National Science Week, pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 visit East Malling Research Station to study food propagation for the growing of fruit. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 visit local castles and Year 3 visit Canterbury. All these experiences make a very valuable contribution to pupils' education.
- 32 Well-forged links with the local community are established through well-planned visits to the homes of senior citizens. Children from the local playgroups join the senior citizens on visits to school assemblies and play productions. Very strong links are made with local secondary schools to ensure a smooth transition for Year 6 pupils, who attend 'taster lessons' at local schools. Forty per cent of pupils go on to local grammar schools. Pupils are offered cultural and academic enrichment through their study of the French language, culture and everyday life. Multicultural awareness is developed well, for example, through an introduction to the music of Israel and identifying characteristics of a Calypso. Overall the wealth of opportunities offered provide significant enrichment to the curriculum for all pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 33 The school cares very well for its pupils and this represents an improvement over the last inspection. Also improved is the monitoring of academic performance and personal development, which is very good.
- 34 The school is a very safe environment with good supervision throughout the school day. All the expected safety measures are in place and regular safety checks are made by a governor, the results being recorded and addressed appropriately. Child protection procedures are very good, a particular strength being the extent of the training given to all staff in the identification of children at risk.
- 35 The school caters well for the welfare of the pupils, for instance pupils who exhibit allergic responses to certain foods are clearly identified for all staff. In the case of very severe allergies, the immediate antidote is kept in two locations within the school. Aspects of the personal, social and health education programme help pupils to look after themselves.' Circle Time' also makes a good contribution.
- 36 Pupils are known very well by their teachers, who give good support and advice about their personal development. Behaviour is well monitored and the procedures are very successful. They are based on clear rules, parental support and good classroom practice. The monitoring of attendance is very good. Parents are very good at notifying the school about reasons for absence. The school follows up notified absences after a few days if no further report has been received. There is never any need to involve the Education Welfare Officer.
- 37 Monitoring of academic performance and personal development is very good, with each teacher devising and making use of the system that best suits them. The teachers work well together to ensure consistency in practice, making assessment a natural part of teaching and learning. Teachers collaborate effectively in coming to agreement about how to identify the different levels of attainment in English and mathematics represented in the pupils' work. The assessment arrangements in Year

6 conform to those proposed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The assessment co-ordinator and co-ordinators of subjects work well together in creating greater consistency in assessment practices between teachers. Assessment is used well to guide curricular planning. An interesting example of this occurred in a Year 1 lesson, where the class had not grasped a mathematical concept as easily as the teacher had expected. Not only was the lesson modified, but also the content of the next lesson was changed to give more attention to the difficulty.

- 38 Pupils are made aware of assessment targets. For instance, in English the targets for the various stages are published on the classroom wall and all pupils know what they have to do to achieve the next stage. In preparation for parents' evenings, teachers analyse each pupil's academic and personal development performance, the latter in terms of behaviour, attitude and pace of working. This information is used well to guide their discussions with parents. Teachers ensure that the information received in return from parents is recorded in the pupil's personal record together with any action agreed. This is then reviewed at the next evening. Other personal development factors, such as persistence and co-operation, are also recorded. These practices support the teachers' very good knowledge of the pupils. Pupils' achievements are acknowledged through praise and certificates of achievement. Pupils' work is also celebrated through attractive displays.
- 39 The school makes every effort to identify, at an early stage, pupils who may have special educational needs. There is a good range of procedures and tests to identify precisely the area and level of need for pupils with special educational needs. Progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans is reviewed regularly. Each target is carefully assessed and detailed information recorded about what pupils are able or unable to do. Weekly record sheets are kept up-to-date. Each session is evaluated and the information fed into lesson plans and individual education plans. The school has access to a wide range of specialist services with whom it has very good relationships. The use of outside agencies is clearly documented.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 40 The school's partnership with parents is very good. It is one of the many strengths of the school. It was also very good at the last inspection. Parents appreciate the very good education their children receive. They value particularly the very good teaching provided, the good behaviour, the high expectations and the standards achieved.
- 41 The school works very closely with parents. Parents acknowledge this. Many come into school to help with lessons. In one mathematics lesson, for example, the parent was giving some very useful help to pupils who were finding subtraction difficult. Parents also help with refereeing games, organising school trips, providing transport for sporting events and even dress up as Father Christmas. Parents also listen to pupils read. Termly parents' evenings are very well attended and the school provides occasional sessions to inform parents on matters related to the curriculum. The school has good procedures for recording information provided by parents. Home-school agreements are in place, but little benefit has been experienced by the school or parents. There is a lively parent/teachers' association that provides social events for both pupils and adults. The association has been consulted about homework, the development of play areas and the range of sports to be provided.
- 42 The information provided for parents is good. The prospectus is full of useful

information and reports are prepared with great care, contain good descriptions of work done, contain some targets, often rather general and there are few suggestions about what pupils should do to improve.

- 43 Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress. They are fully involved in the identification of their children's needs and in the reviews of progress. The school works closely with the families of pupils for whom English is an additional language in determining the level of support they need until they are fluent and confident English speakers. The school nurtures very supportive relationships with the parents of the very young children. The teachers use the time of arrival and departure to discuss the individual children's progress.
- 44 There are good induction procedures for pupils when they first join the school. The local branch library is adjacent to the school and all pupils are automatically enrolled.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 45 The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, ably supported in the day-to-day running of the school by his deputy and other senior colleagues, is a key factor in the overall effectiveness of the school. The very clear educational direction to the work of the school is a tribute to the quality of the involvement of all staff in supporting very effective planning, comprehensive documentation and the implementation of clear, down-to-earth policies. Significant thought has been given to the delegation of responsibilities by ensuring, for instance, that those who carry responsibility for managing subjects are sufficiently skilled and effectively supported as they develop their roles. The deputy is relatively new to the school, but is steadily establishing himself in his role, working very effectively with the headteacher in managing the transfer of the school from Grant Maintained status to that of a Foundation school. The high quality of the overall leadership and management of the school has supported the raising of standards of attainment and the building of a strong team of mutually supportive teachers. The leadership and management of subjects are good in most subjects. They are very good in mathematics, information communications technology, religious education, design and technology, geography and French; they are satisfactory in history.
- 46 The management of provision for the children who are under five is very good; it is clearly documented and carefully monitored. The teachers and other adults in these classes work very effectively as a team and thus ensure the children grow progressively in the development of their skills and confidence. The improvement of provision for the children who are under five has been one of the most significant achievements since the previous inspection. There has been considerable improvement in the quality and range of the play equipment that was judged to be inadequate at the previous inspection. Due to the commitment, skill and dedication of a very effective early years team, the good provision noted at the previous inspection has been built on by skilful management.
- 47 The governing body is excellently led in the exercise of its responsibilities. The governors know the school very well. They bring to bear a high level of relevant expertise on the exercise of their responsibilities. They have formed themselves into a very effective group. They have been particularly diligent in monitoring the school's effectiveness, whilst respecting the professional judgement of the teachers. Individual governors take responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school's work. They

carry out the related responsibilities very rigorously. The governors' clear understanding both of the school's strengths and where it needs to go forward in its development puts their involvement with the school on a very secure footing. They have ensured that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to the provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship for all the pupils.

- 48 The management and organisation of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school's policy and practice fully meet the Code of Practice. The co-ordination and administration of procedures is thorough. All individual education plans are fully up-to-date. The good range of specialist resources available for work with pupils with special needs has a positive impact on the progress they make. Provision for the needs of these pupils is well served by the designation of an experienced governor with responsibility for the oversight of this area. The governors fulfil all their responsibilities related to pupils with special educational needs, including those concerned with reporting to parents about how the relevant resources have been deployed. They are provided with clear information on budgeting and planning for the pupils with special learning needs. The school is consistently sensitive and responsive to the management of provision for pupils with physical disabilities. The very good provision for these pupils is managed very effectively and clearly contributes to the progress they make in their work. The provision of a very good range of mobility exercises and physiotherapy is made possible by a very well-appointed specialist facility.
- 49 Significant improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection are due to a considerable extent to well-conceived new appointments. Allied to improvements in teaching have been improvements in the quality of pupils' learning and in the standards of attainment. The systematic monitoring of teaching, whereby good practice is identified and disseminated and the strong support for teachers new to the school has had a very clear impact on the quality of teaching. In some cases, however, the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently precise to take teachers, who are already good, further forward in their skills. Teachers who experience difficulties are provided with the appropriate level of support. They are helped to identify their own needs and to draw on the experience of other staff. The newly-qualified teacher receives a very good level of support. Learning support assistants work effectively with the class teacher in managing the provision of special help to pupils.
- 50 The teachers form a skilful, cohesive, self-critical group and exhibit a sense of common purpose, working in close collaboration with one another within and across the key stages. The headteacher's clarity of vision and the enthusiasm of all staff assure the continued critical development of the school. A great strength is the way all the staff have collaborated in a detailed analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. This has resulted in a very secure base from which to map out future developments. Appropriate, challenging but feasible targets are set and met. After the last inspection, the school and the governors set their sights on a number of key objectives. These related to areas of relative weakness, identified in the report on the inspection, in the documentation to support teaching, in the quality and use of assessment and in the dissemination of good practice. Very significant strides have been made on all these fronts. There is clear evidence of a robust and effective response to the previous inspection. Other minor matters raised throughout the previous report have been successfully tackled.
- 51 There has been much detailed and effective planning related to the development of literacy and numeracy and this has borne fruit, particularly in the quality of writing

across the school and in the confident use of number, for example, in science. A strength of the governors' involvement has been the extent to which they have participated in debate and training in relation to the development of literacy and numeracy. They have been represented on out-of-school and in-school training days for staff. This has laid the foundation of very effective monitoring by the governors of developments in these areas.

- 52 The school's finances are managed very effectively through the very high level of expertise of the finance consultant who works closely, and very effectively, with the administrative officer. Financial planning is very tightly linked to the school's development plan and is very effective in ensuring that expenditure is directed towards agreed priorities. This is particularly evident in the school's planning and budgeting for the possible transition to two-form entry. Clear and comprehensive reports are prepared for governors. All additional funding received by the school is very clearly directed towards the appropriate purposes. There are very clear plans in place for the management of funds available for the development of information and communications technology.
- 53 The school's good level of resources is well managed. Accommodation is good. It is enhanced by a very large grassed area, which supports a very good level of provision for games. There are some very attractive flowerbeds and pleasing landscaping. The accommodation is well managed. Classrooms are mostly of adequate size. The school is very well maintained. Very good use is made of wall space to celebrate the pupils' work through very attractive displays. The display of masks and other work in the hall is outstanding. In response to an issue raised in the previous inspection, the school has taken appropriate steps to ensure privacy for the older pupils when changing for physical education.
- 54 The school makes good use of information and communications technology and has steadily improved the level of the teachers' expertise. All subjects provide opportunities for the use and application of information communications technology. Pupils make good use of the Internet and e-mail. Information communications technology is used very well to support financial planning and management. The computerised system in use gives easy access to clear and accessible statements of accounts. The most recent auditor's report found the systems used by the school to be good, apart from a few minor procedural items which have been effectively addressed.
- 55 Funding for books has been rightly directed towards the development of the school's initiatives in raising standards of literacy and numeracy. There is a very good match of the teachers' qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. This shows itself in the quality of teaching. Support staff, too, demonstrate a good level of skill in the exercise of their distinctive responsibilities. There is a good level of appropriate expertise to identify and support pupils with special educational needs, including the small number who have English as an additional language. There is a strong programme of professional development, which is closely linked to the school's excellent work in self-evaluation.
- 56 The school is rigorous in the application of best value principles. It compares its costs to that of similar schools in order to ensure efficiency. The cost of educating each pupil is around average for a school of its kind. The local area is very well used to enrich the curriculum, particularly through the strong links with local business and industry. The school is diligent in seeking the views of parents and relevant professionals before taking major decisions.

57 The school has built significantly on the very good standards of management noted in the report on the previous inspection. Roles and responsibilities are now even more clearly defined and focused on continuing to raise the already good standards of attainment. There is now even greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluating the progress made towards planned developments and on ensuring that teachers are well supported in their work through effective and sensitive monitoring.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58 This is a very effective school, with no significant weaknesses. However, in the context of the school's many strengths, which far outweigh its weaknesses, the governors and the school should consider the following actions in order to take the school further forward in its development:

- Further improve the quality of the monitoring of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, by helping teachers to identify the details of their teaching and thus provide them with a clearer focus for the development of their skills. (See para 47)
- Ensure that teachers implement very clear expectations for classroom routines and behaviour in all lessons. (see Para 17)
- Develop strategies for the provision of clear and specific feedback to individual learners.
(see para 17)
- Include targets for improvement in all reports to parents on pupils' progress. (see para 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	42	39	12	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	263
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	2
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	22	17	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	18
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	36	36	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (97)	92 (97)	87 (97)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	19	20
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	36	35	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (96)	90 (95)	92 (96)
	National	82 (81)	86 (86)	87 (85)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	13	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	15	14
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	24	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (77)	87 (88)	83 (83)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	14
	Girls	12	11	10
	Total	27	26	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (83)	87 (83)	83 (83)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	236
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.3
Average class size	22.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	464561
Total expenditure	468149
Expenditure per pupil	1822
Balance brought forward from previous year	35334
Balance carried forward to next year	31746

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	263
Number of questionnaires returned	125

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	35	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	42	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	45	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	50	10	1	2
The teaching is good.	67	33	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	50	12	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	28	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	45	48	4	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	81	18	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	40	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	31	10	5	14

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised

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

CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE UNDER FIVE

- 59 All children who are under five are based in one of the two reception classes. At the time of the inspection the majority of children were aged four and with the exception of one pupil with special educational needs, all attended full-time.
- 60 The majority of pupils enter school with mainly average skills in literacy and numeracy, personal and social development and physical skills. Children in the Reception classes achieve very good standards in developing language, in early reading, writing and mathematics, in creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The vast majority of pupils should achieve the desirable learning outcomes well before they are five. Many pupils are already exceeding these expectations. The curriculum is well balanced and offers a wide range of stimulating activities, which capture children's enthusiasm and greatly enhance the quality of their learning. Teachers' planning is thorough and the development of specific areas of learning is effectively assessed through the use of weekly focus target sheets, which record what individual children have achieved. The high quality of teaching seen in this age group is a strength of the school.

Personal and social development

- 61 The children achieve very good standards of personal and social development. Class routines are very well established and children acquire very good work habits. Their behaviour is very good and they are able to share and take turns when working in pairs or small groups. They sustain very good levels of concentration and persevere with their work. The children are keen and interested in their learning and set about their tasks with great enthusiasm. They display above average independence for children of this age group, dressing themselves quickly, changing groups smoothly between activities and tidying away their equipment very well. They develop very good relationships with their friends and with the adults who work with them.
- 62 The children show very good awareness of the needs and feelings of others in their classroom activities and in particular during 'Circle Time'. Children talk about their families and recall occasions when they have listened well to the advice of adults. They are able to pass around a teddy and only speak if they want to and have something relevant to say. They all listen carefully to what is said by other children or the teacher.
- 63 Personal and social development is very well taught and teachers use a wide range of situations and strategies to help develop pupils' learning. The high expectations of the teachers are revealed in the progressively challenging tasks that are set. Consequently, children acquire above average skills for their age group.

Language and Literacy

- 64 Standards of attainment in language and literacy are very good. Children listen attentively in small or large groups and talk confidently about their experiences. In whole school assemblies, children in the Reception class describe what they have learnt about the life cycle of frogs and how they themselves have changed since they were babies. They sing songs and speak in unison to the audience, displaying speaking and listening skills that are well above average. During assembly the children also use simple actions and facial expression to convey meaning, resulting in the audience being treated to an absolutely delightful experience.

- 65 Pupils listen well to stories in class and most recall main events and re-tell stories orally and in picture form. During role-play activities in the playhouse, the children make up their own stories and act out, for example, the roles of policeman, fireman or grandparent with enthusiasm and confidence.
- 66 Children enjoy books and handle them with care. They are enthusiastic about their reading and use picture and phonic clues well. When reading as a class from a big book they identify different letter sounds and most children recognise the initial sounds of words. Some children also recognise the blends 'sh', 'ch', and 'ee'. The children know that print carries meaning and also notice differences in the size of the text and know that this indicates that the word should be read loudly.
- 67 The children's writing is well developed; most write their own name and attempt to write their own words using initial letters correctly. Some children spell simple three-letter words, using letter headbands. They are beginning to learn about different forms of writing and talk about what needs to be written on a party invitation. The standards achieved in language and literacy are above average.
- 68 The teaching of language and literacy is very good. Lessons offer an excellent range of activities and are well paced. Imaginative use of role play, rhymes and stories and a clear focus on the development of vocabulary, results in the rapid development of the children's language and literacy skills. The teaching staff display skilful use of questioning to involve all pupils and to help them to think and organise their thoughts and ideas. They plan effectively for the development of language and literacy skills, building carefully on the children's previous experience. They make or use stimulating resources to support learning and enrich the children's learning experiences. A particularly good example of this are the 'story sacks' which include story books, velcro pictures and related objects to help children to recall the order of events and retell of stories.

Mathematics

- 69 The children achieve very good standards in mathematics. Most have already reached the standards they are expected to achieve by the age of five. They follow quite complex clapping patterns and sing number rhymes, which involve counting forwards and backwards to and from numbers up to ten. A few pupils extend this up to twenty. Whilst sitting in a circle, most pupils count, in turn, numbers up to twenty. With the help of a large number line, the children demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the mathematical terms 'smaller than' and 'larger than' The children recognise 1p coins and are beginning to use them in simple shopping activities. Most pupils write numbers accurately and order numbers to 10; recognise and name squares and circles and identify whether an object is big or small, heavy or light.
- 70 The teaching of mathematics is very good. Lessons are well planned and offer a wide range of experiences. Number rhymes are used effectively to enhance the children's learning. The children show great delight when singing. No opportunity is wasted and extra practice of these takes place while children are washing hands or lining up. Lessons are lively and move at a quick pace, which sustains the children's interest and concentration. The extensive use of mathematics vocabulary, which is re-inforced in the teaching of other areas of learning, is a particularly strong feature of the teaching of mathematics. Teaching staff provide children with clear strategies for developing number skills, for example, children are taught to mark each object when counting so that it is not counted twice. Clear questions help children to focus their thinking and the range of difficulty is varied according to their needs.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 71 The children enjoy learning about the world around them. They investigate their

environment and the materials they handle. They talk about the changes to themselves and other life forms as they grow and identify what is similar and what is different, for example, when comparing what they ate as babies with what they eat now. They use their observational skills well and use a hand lens with care. They record the changes that are occurring in tadpoles in simple pictorial form in their tadpole diaries. They talk about and draw members of their family in a simple diagram. They sort materials into objects that are attracted to magnets and those that are not. Whilst investigating bubbles they identify the fact that they contain air. They know that air is blown out of their bodies and into the bubble and that bubbles are always round. They design biscuits to represent bunnies and butterflies, and select and use materials with care and imagination. They use small and large constructional equipment to build items from their own imagination or to fulfil a specific request from the teacher. The children use computers confidently and are able to demonstrate good mouse control in simple sorting programs.

- 72 The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good. A wide range of activities that stimulate the children's interest is provided. The learning is well planned and involves the children in using as many senses as possible. The teachers' planning builds upon the children's previous experience in a systematic way and is therefore very effective. Excellent questioning skills help children to make sense of their activities and recall processes accurately. Attention is drawn to health and safety and to personal hygiene. Careful choice of resources significantly enhances learning, for example, in a bubble experiment when thin and fat straws, sieves and funnels of various shapes and patterns were used. Extensive use of appropriate and challenging vocabulary is also a key feature of the teaching.

Physical Development

- 73 Children's development in their gross motor control is above average and most are already exceeding the standards expected for pupils of this age. In physical education, children show an increasing capacity to control movements and a clear awareness of space. Children show a high level of confidence when performing for their peers and use their bodies well to demonstrate a variety of shapes. When asked to perform in the role of giants or fairies their interpretation is very good. Most children use large apparatus imaginatively and safely and show awareness of their peers.
- 74 The creation of a safe outdoor area for the children with direct access from the Reception classrooms means that there has been a considerable improvement in the provision for this area of learning since the last inspection. The acquisition of a range of large agility equipment and large-scale toys also greatly enhances provision.
- 75 The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good. In physical education teachers are particularly adept at engaging the imagination of the children. They reveal high expectations in the way that they give progressively challenging tasks within a safe, supportive environment. Teachers give very clear instructions; this results in the children producing shapes and controlled body patterns that are better than those normally seen at this age.

Creative development

- 76 Learning songs and how to play percussion instruments aids the development of creative skills. Children clap rhythms and follow quite complex clapping patterns. They use percussion instruments to experiment with sounds and to refine their ideas of loud and soft or quiet. Opportunities for free painting and for colour mixing enable children to build on their creative skills. They display very good skills for their age in observational drawing and most draw tadpoles with recognisable heads and tails. Children design objects using a range of materials, for example, they use sweets of various shapes to design the faces on biscuits and to create the patterns for the wings of butterflies. Very good opportunities for role-play mean that the children's skills, for example, in enacting scenes from well-known fairy tales are well developed.
- 77 Teaching in this area of learning is very good. An imaginative range of very well-planned activities means that the children have access to a rich and stimulating learning environment
- 78 Resources are carefully chosen to complement and support the children's learning and clearly focused learning objectives ensure that the work is targeted on children's needs.

ENGLISH

- 79 Standards of attainment in English are above average overall. The attainment of seven year-olds is well above average. In the National Curriculum tests for 1999 most pupils achieved well above the national averages for both reading and writing.
- 80 Taking the average level reached by pupils the standards of attainment in reading were well above national averages for all schools and well above those reached by pupils at schools in similar circumstances. Standards in writing are well above the national average for all schools and above the standards reached by pupils at schools in similar circumstances.
- 81 The standards of attainment seen in lessons and in the pupils' work reflect the very high standards revealed in the tests. Pupils talk confidently about their work, explaining the purpose of tasks undertaken and of discoveries made. For example, Year 1 pupils explained how to extract information from a non-fiction book by referring to the index card and to the contents page.
- 82 Pupils, at all levels of attainment, read fluently using a good range of strategies to understand the meaning of the text. Pupils explain the sequence of events in stories that they read, relating the characters and the actions to their own experiences. For example, one pupil reading about 'Susannah the Swan' explained how she 'can somersault like a swan in the school swimming pool'. The standards of attainment seen in lessons and in the pupils' work reflect the very good standards reached in the tests.
- 83 Seven year-olds use joined handwriting that is developing into legible script with well-formed letters. Pupils' written work, at this age, is imaginative and shows an understanding of the features of different styles of writing. For example, in Year 2 pupils explore the different forms of presentation used for writing poetry and for writing prose. One budding poet sparked his poem into life with the opening lines 'In the land of the chocolate stars/All the people eat Mars Bars'.

- 84 The attainment of 11 year-olds, in the lessons and in work seen is above national expectations. Standards reached by 11 year-olds in the National Curriculum tests for English in 1999 were well above those attained nationally and above the standards reached by pupils at schools in similar circumstances. The trend over time indicates that the school's level of attainment in English is rising more rapidly than the rise indicated by the results of pupils at other schools. Therefore it is reasonable to predict that the results of a significant proportion of pupils from the present cohort will reach levels in English well above those expected nationally. The headteacher monitors the performance of all groups of pupils and targets for improvement are reviewed regularly to ensure that all pupils reach their fullest potential.
- 85 All groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Pupils read a wide range of texts for pleasure and for interest. During lessons pupils are introduced to classical authors such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and Robert Louis Stevenson.
- 86 Pupils at all levels of attainment retrieve, select and collate information from a range of sources including the Internet. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias are in frequent use. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, investigate problems confidently using a variety of research skills. For example, pupils in a mixed age class of Years 4 and 5 were learning about appropriate styles of writing for different purposes by exploring the features of explanatory writing. Pupils used their research skills to discover information about life and culture in Ancient Egypt. They develop a personal style in their writing with innovative touches that delight and surprise the reader.
- 87 The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are very good in relation to their prior attainment. The range of work suggested in the National Literacy Strategy is covered. Some of the results are remarkable. For example, one pupil explained that after reading many books about animals she has written her own story that is nearly finished. The title is Homeward Bound and tells the adventures of two cats and a dog.
- 88 The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 1. The teachers inspire a love of learning and a sense of pride in their work among all pupils. All teachers follow the framework of the National Literacy Strategy, structuring their lessons to meet the objectives suggested for each term. Teachers' effective planning results in a range of challenging opportunities that are offered through activities matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils respond enthusiastically making very good progress in developing the basic skills of speaking coherently, reading fluently and writing clearly. Pupils' learning develops through listening to stories read by the teacher and talking about the outcomes. For example, a Year 1 class discussed the properties of water, light and air needed to make seeds grow. This led to lively discussion and good use of the appropriate language.
- 89 Most pupils read accurately. A good proportion read fluently. Written comprehension exercises indicate that pupils read with a growing understanding of the text. For example, a pupil from Year 2 read the story of 'The Sick Dragon' and identified his problem – 'he couldn't blow out fire because he did not have a red throat.' As a result of the very good teaching, pupils' writing is clear and organised in a variety of styles including both prose and poetry. For example, a Year 2 pupil wrote an impressive four-line poem in the style of one that he had studied. This showed a clear sense of how to structure a poem and hold the reader or listener's attention.

- 90 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is good overall. Some very good teaching was seen in some classes, with pockets of satisfactory teaching in others. In the best lessons seen, pupils concentrate on the complex texts set and work independently to solve the problems of presenting their written work in the appropriate style and form. For example, pupils in Year 6 use persuasive writing to structure arguments for and against a plan to build a new supermarket in the local area. Teachers' enthusiasm has a strong impact on pupils' learning. For example, in a lesson for a mixed class of pupils from Years 4 and 5 the teacher used the text for shared reading to build excitement into the mystery story being read. Pupils were alert and receptive to learning as the climax was reached and the culprit was discovered. As a result the pupils wrote some interesting and lively opening paragraphs for their own compositions.
- 91 A strength of the English teaching is the consistently good progress in learning made by pupils in relation to their levels of prior attainment. The support given for the development of literacy skills encourages pupils to make worthy efforts in their learning and to keep trying to improve their work. In less successful lessons, the tasks set for group activities are not always clearly related to the purpose of the lesson, with the consequence that pupils do not always see the point of the exercise. Occasionally pupils are not arranged appropriately so as to see the text for shared reading.
- 92 The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language are achieving some good and very good results. Booster classes meet regularly after school to help support pupils in Year 6 to meet their targets set for achievement by the end of the year. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged by the targets set for them.
- 93 The curriculum for English is broad and balanced well to ensure that literacy skills support good learning in all subject areas. Skills learned in the literacy lessons are well employed in other subjects across the curriculum. For example, in a religious education lesson Year 6 pupils use their skills of poetry analysis to write an up-to-date version of the Lord's Prayer. Pupils' speaking and listening is extended through the acquisition of conversational French. The technical language of subjects is used appropriately by most pupils. For example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils used mathematical vocabulary to explain number operations and data handling.
- 94 All written work seen has been marked carefully. Most teachers write helpful comments suggesting ways in which their pupils can improve the quality of their work. Teachers know their pupils well and have detailed knowledge of their work. Resources are used profitably and maintained well. Displays of pupils' work in all classrooms provide a constant encouragement for pupils to produce their very best work. Good use is made of information technology. In all lessons seen computer programs were being used effectively to support learning relevant to the topic that was being studied. The many drama productions provide a valuable support for the pupils' personal development.
- 95 There have been considerable improvements made since the last inspection. Schemes of work are organised to fulfil the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy. This has had a significant impact on the standards of attainment which are now well above national averages. There was a sharp rise in the attainment of 11 year-olds in the 1999 National Curriculum tests. Clear targets have been identified for

attainment at both key stages and these are reviewed regularly. The monitoring of teaching has been introduced effectively,

MATHEMATICS

- 96 The results from the 1999 national tests in mathematics show that, compared with schools nationally, seven-year-olds reached standards that are in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 was also close to the national average. These results are broadly in line with those gained by pupils from similar backgrounds. Test results have fluctuated from year to year and reveal that standards are slightly lower than previously reported. However, the 1999 group of Year 2 pupils contained a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than is normal for the school.
- 97 During the inspection, the vast majority of Year 2 pupils were working at the expected level for their age with some pupils achieving higher levels. There is a wide range of attainment within the current year group but inspection findings indicate that standards overall are above average. These findings are similar to those reported in the previous inspection. Secure foundations for numeracy are laid in the Reception classes. Pupils make good progress towards the challenging targets that the school has agreed with the local educational authority. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and also make good progress.
- 98 Pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics vocabulary. The effective way in which teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical terms enables them to respond confidently to questions and talk about their method of working. By the age of seven, the majority of pupils count and order numbers to one hundred and understand the place value of each digit. Regular practice of mental mathematics enables pupils to develop different strategies for solving problems mentally, for example, when adding nine or eleven. Pupils add two two-digit numbers and find the difference by counting up from the smaller to the large number. Pupils apply these number skills well when working with money. The attention given by teachers to counting on in sets of ten, five, two and three helps pupils to become increasingly confident in understanding and recalling multiplication facts. Pupils are encouraged to apply their number skills in different context to help when working in other aspects of the mathematics curriculum. For instance, Year 2 pupils made good use of their knowledge of fractions to clarify their understanding of *half past*, *quarter to* and *quarter past* the hour. They develop understanding of the relevance of data-handling by recording the scores of the weekly mathematics tests on a block graph. Pupils use both non-standard and standard units of metric measure in the context of length and identify a right angle as a measure of a quarter turn. They develop a good knowledge of the vocabulary related to time and read the time to the hour, half-hour and quarter hour on an analogue or digital clock. Pupils develop a good understanding of shape and space and name common two and three-dimensional shapes. They are aware of the symmetrical properties of some shapes and pictures.
- 99 The results from the 1999 national tests in mathematics show that, compared with schools nationally, 11 year-olds reached standards that are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 was also well above the national average. These results are well above the average gained by pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the past two years standards have risen rapidly; much faster than the national rate.

- 100 Inspection findings show that standards achieved by 11 year-olds reflect the most recent test results and are well above average. The vast majority of pupils work confidently at the expected level for their age. Higher-attaining pupils achieve consistently at and often beyond the expected level. They make good progress overall. In the lessons seen pupils consolidate their previous learning and frequently move on to cover new ground. Teachers match tasks to the different attainment within the class. This helps pupils to make good progress as tasks are set at an appropriately challenging level for all groups. Pupils with special educational needs and the higher-attaining pupils achieve very well as a result of the very good provision that the school makes to meet their specific needs.
- 101 Eleven year-old pupils have a good knowledge of related number facts, which they use when solving problems mentally. They have good knowledge of informal and standard written methods. Their understanding of the four operations of number is good. They successfully apply these when working with decimal fractions. Pupils' knowledge of mathematical vocabulary is very good; it enables them to interpret and solve accurately a variety of problems. They understand percentages and recognise their fractional and decimal equivalents. They know the different units of measure, including the rough equivalents of miles and kilometres, and have progressed to converting from one to the other. They recognise where a shape will be after reflection, and after two translations. Pupils find the mode, mean and median of a set of data. The higher-attaining pupils make reasoned judgements about what the data tells them. All pupils record and interpret data represented on a range of graphs; for example, they record information about cricket scores on a frequency graph.
- 102 Pupils enjoy mathematics and behave very well in lessons. They work very effectively together in groups, supporting one another with their work. They are eager to respond to quick-fire questions when practising mental mathematics. They rise to the challenges set and set themselves challenges by often moving on to tackle more demanding problems. They are very attentive in lessons, showing good attention spans.
- 103 The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good, particularly in Key Stage 2. In four of the lessons seen it was very good or excellent. All the teaching seen was good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when 60 per cent of the lessons were good but there was also some unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high and this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils respond positively to mathematics. They enjoy the lessons. The majority work hard and this contributes to the quality of their learning, which is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers make good use of praise to reward success, effort and attentiveness. This helps to build pupils' confidence and encourages them to rise to the challenges presented. For example, Year 6 pupils responded very well to the rapid pace set by the teacher in mental mathematics, which focused on finding different percentages of £1024. In a Years 4 and 5 lesson, pupils created their own challenge by finding more complex ways of achieving a target number. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and have quickly adapted their teaching to the model of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers expect pupils to concentrate in lessons and this has a positive effect on the quality and quantity of work produced. Pupils use the time well to improve their learning.
- 104 The quality of teachers' planning is good. The weekly and daily structure promotes meaningful learning experiences over a sequence of lessons. Lessons have a clear focus and teachers communicate clearly to pupils what they expect them to know by

the end of the lesson. The pupils' understanding of the purpose of the work they are doing supports significant progress in their work. There is a wide spread of attainment within classes, particularly the mixed-age classes. Teachers carefully plan activities to meet the needs of the different groups and work is set at an appropriately challenging level to extend the learning of all pupils. Good examples are seen in a Years 1 and 2 class when working on solving money problems and in Year 6 work on handling data. Setting arrangements for the mixed-age groups in Key Stage 2 help all pupils to work at an appropriate pace.

- 105 Teachers use an effective range of methods and resources to develop pupils' understanding. Good use of questions, such as "How do you know that forty-five is a multiple of five?" and "How did you find the answer?" helps to clarify pupils' understanding of concepts and methods of working. There is strong emphasis on understanding and using mathematical vocabulary, which supports the development of pupils' literacy skills and helps them to interpret mathematics problems more accurately. Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations of new concepts and methods to move forward pupils' learning. Good monitoring of pupils' work enables teachers to intervene and give appropriate support or to provide additional tasks which further extend pupils' learning. For example, a Years 4 and 5 lesson, introducing measuring angles using a protractor, moved on to more difficult diagrams where the pupils were required to find for themselves the best way of positioning the protractor.
- 106 Day-to-day assessment of pupils is good, particularly in Key Stage 1 where teachers use the information to plan future work for individual pupils. Teachers use the plenary session well to clarify misunderstandings, consolidate pupils' knowledge and skills and to assess progress made towards the learning objectives. Learning support staff are well prepared and provide very effective support and guidance for pupils throughout the lesson enabling lower-attaining pupils to participate in the tasks and make good progress. Teachers' management of pupils is good, particularly in Key Stage 1. In some Key Stage 2 classes pupils tend to chatter when they are working independently and this slows the pace of working. Although teachers intervene to address the problem, the effects are short-term. Teachers respond to pupils' ideas positively and speak to them pleasantly. Relationships with each other and adults throughout the school are very good. Pupils work together well and are supportive of each other.
- 107 Assessment procedures in mathematics are very good. Pupils take weekly tests to assess progress. There are sound opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, particularly information technology and geography. The leadership and management of the subject are good and characterised by a clear sense of purpose and direction. Although the mathematics co-ordinator was new to the school at the start of the academic year he has already gained a good understanding of mathematics within the school. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively managed through the provision of in-service training, the good teamwork and planning of the staff.

SCIENCE

- 108 The overall attainment of seven year-olds in science is above average. However, a below average proportion of pupils reached the higher levels in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, particularly in experimental and investigative science. Performance in relation to schools in similar circumstances in the tests was average.
- 109 Work seen during lessons was above the national expectations for seven year-olds. Pupils enjoy scientific activities and are confident in talking about their work, using a growing understanding of scientific vocabulary. From their practical investigations, they gain good levels of understanding of living things and forces. By the age of seven, pupils sort fruit and vegetables based on their scientific knowledge and correctly identify the parts of flowering plants. They know that humans eat different parts of vegetables, for example, the roots, stem, flower or seeds. They know that plants drink water. They use observational skills well to describe and record how white carnations change colour when food colouring is added to the water. With support, they begin to conduct a fair test and know that the amount of food colouring added to each of their flower experiments must be the same. Pupils know that even if a lid is placed on a box some oxygen will remain inside and therefore plants may still grow.
- 110 Attainment of 11 year-olds in the national tests in 1999 was above average, with the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels being well above average. Boys and girls reached comparable standards. The trend in the school's overall attainment has been broadly in line with the national trend. When compared to similar schools, attainment is average.
- 111 Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils build progressively on their learning. Good examples of understanding circuits are seen in the work of a Years 3 and 4 class. Pupils in Year 5 show a deepening awareness of the growth needs of plants. They put forward ideas and comment on whether or not they are practical. They design fair tests, varying one factor whilst keeping other elements the same.
- 112 By the age of 11, in the lessons seen and in the work analysed, pupils reach above average standards of attainment. In lessons, pupils build upon their prior learning well and increase their knowledge and understanding of life and living processes, materials and the effects of forces. They carry out investigations safely, use equipment well and record their findings in a variety of ways, which include the use of information technology. They choose a sensible scale for graphical representation, for example, when deciding how to record the results of an experiment that placed increasing weight on a spring.
- 113 Pupils display very good literacy skills in their work and scientific accounts are clearly described with high standards of presentation. By the end of the key stage their use of appropriate scientific vocabulary is good. Pupils apply mathematics well in reading measurements of length and weight.
- 114 Pupils show enthusiasm for their work and behave well during science lessons. They work collaboratively in pairs or small groups and treat the ideas of others with respect. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and work is appropriately modified for their needs. Consequently they achieve well according to their prior attainment. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well, but on occasions are not given enough opportunities to draw their own conclusions or to apply their knowledge to solve everyday real-life problems.

- 115 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. The strengths of the teaching at this stage are effective planning, the use of clear questioning skills, the encouragement given to the use of scientific vocabulary and the management of pupils. Planning is effective in that it has clear learning objectives and provides a good range of activities, which build progressively on pupils' learning. Teachers are skilled in their use of questions, which enable pupils to reflect on their learning and formulate and extend ideas.
- 116 Teaching in Key Stage 2 ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. Effective teaching is evident when the pace of the lessons is quick and clear questioning skills help pupils to deepen their understanding through practical experimentation and extensive use of scientific vocabulary. Teaching is less effective when pupils are not asked to explain the reasons for their thinking or the use of scientific vocabulary is restricted.
- 117 Marking is used well to praise and encourage pupils and to clarify any misconceptions with exemplification. Teaching staff use assessment effectively to adapt their lessons and to plan the next steps in learning for their pupils.
- 118 The school has improved since the last inspection and has begun to use the national non-statutory yearly planning documents, which provide more information on the content to be covered in science lessons and help to ensure progression in knowledge and understanding. Recently, the school has introduced a shared approach to science investigation work through the use of a planning sheet, which is adapted for Key Stages 1 and 2. This is proving to be an effective way of supporting pupils' work and extending scientific thinking. With older pupils, this is most effective when it is specifically adapted by teaching staff to develop the learning objectives and pupils continue to write experiments in their science books using the sheet to provide structure. The quality of printed resource material to support teachers has also been improved.
- 119 Science is well managed. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator plays a greater role in monitoring teaching and learning.

ART

- 120 There were limited opportunities to observe art lessons during the inspection. However, discussions with pupils and teachers about their work, looking at teachers' planning and pupils' art on display indicate that pupils in both key stages make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in the development of their art skills. Their work shows an increasing control over the media in which they are working and greater attention to detail. The quality of their knowledge and understanding about art and the work of well-known artists is developing well. Pupils enjoy art and their positive attitude contributes to their learning. They are proud of their finished products and confidently discuss their work.
- 121 Pupils in Key Stage 1 have experience of a good range of art activities and materials, including paint, pastels, textiles, clay and plaster of Paris. In the lesson seen Year 2 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the work of William Morris. They identified an example of his work by drawing on their knowledge of the features of his style of work, aptly described by one pupil as "busy". They worked hard to apply his style to their own designs. As they worked, they described their intentions to their

friends, for example, "My vine winds across the paper" and "I'm going to put leaves on mine". Years 1 and 2 pupils have been exploring texture and created effectively textured clay tiles that also demonstrate their understanding of repeated patterns. These were then used effectively as printing blocks. Pupils have a good understanding of the processes they used to produce the tiles and prints.

- 122 In Key Stage 2 pupils experience an interesting range of projects, such as using the computer program Clip Art to design their own wrapping paper, or learning about Aboriginal art. Year 5 pupils made good use of the Internet to research information about art and supplement examples provided by the teacher. They made good use of line and colour and their careful work clearly reflected the influence of the artist Susan Wanji. Year 6 pupils gave a good account of how they drew their radiating patterns and created the three-dimensional effects by using different shades of colours in the adjoining sectors. Throughout the key stage pupils' artwork reflects the different artists that they have studied. Year 3 produced pictures based on the spatial concepts and colours used by Mondrian, although their effectiveness was diminished by the use of buff coloured paper which reduced the sharpness that would have been attained with the use of white.
- 123 The pupils' good attitudes to their work are revealed in the delight they take in exploring colour and texture in their work. They are, justly, proud of some of the very good work on display. They behave well in lessons and are careful to use resources appropriately. They are good at tidying away materials and other resources after lessons.
- 124 It was not possible to see sufficient lessons in art to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching but the work seen indicates that art is well taught. Planning is good and projects and lessons have a clear focus. The development of pupils' knowledge is well integrated with practical art activities. Although skills are addressed there is a tendency to focus on end products. There is little evidence of extending an idea over time or across a range of media. The scheme of work provides useful guidance for each key stage, but has not yet been developed to include clear guidance on expectations of each year group. Art is well led. The new co-ordinator provides a clear sense of purpose and direction for the development of the subject. The wide range of colourful artwork around the school celebrates pupils' achievements and enhances the general appearance of the building.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 125 Judgements are based on three lessons seen, the analysis of the pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils.
- 126 The overall standards of seven year-olds are very good. Pupils have very good understanding of design processes and use a good variety of materials to draw and construct models, planning the stages of assembly and making suggestions to improve and develop their models. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, where selected groups were either making play apparatus or a paper bag, the lowest-attaining pupils confidently selected and used the tools and materials, while the middle-attaining pupils showed very good accuracy in practical skills and talked about their model using a good range of language. The higher-attaining pupils showed very good understanding of designing and making in the way they questioned and supported each other in their work. Pupils rapidly extend their skills in lessons and over time. For instance, in model-making in the Reception classes, the pupils, using split pins to make 'Dippy Ducks', show an increasing awareness of the potential of the materials

they use for accurate construction. From Year 1, where pupils using simple construction kits, through to Year 2 where they use balsa wood in the construction of swings, slides and a rocking horse, the pupils increasingly evaluate their work. They show a growing confidence in explaining why something is strong or weak, effective or not and draw upon work in other subjects, for example, geography and art to help in design. Information communications technology is used well to record and handle information. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well both in knowledge and skills in relation to their prior attainment.

- 127 In Key Stage 2, pupils, at all levels of prior attainment, continue to make very good progress in their general understanding of materials, structures and construction and show good skills in literacy and numeracy as they write, speak, draw and measure with confidence. For example, in a lesson when Year 3 pupils were making photo-frames, lower-attaining pupils discussed their models, showing a growing awareness of strengths and weaknesses and of how their work could be improved. Higher-attaining pupils designed with confidence, evaluating and refining their first attempts and suggesting imaginative improvements. They showed a very good awareness of materials and of the need for accuracy in cutting and shaping. The accuracy in modelling achieved in the key stage was revealed, too, in the standard of musical instruments made in Year 5 and in the work on fairgrounds in Year 6, where the demands were greater in both planning and making. At this stage, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in Years 4 and 5 when the pupils work on pneumatics in toy making. Throughout the key stage, pupils confidently use information communications technology to extend their work. The overall standard achieved represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when attainment was judged to be around average for both seven and 11 year-olds.
- 128 Pupils reveal positive attitudes to their work in the way they seek to refine and improve their first efforts. They behave well and are good at collaborating in group work. They take care of the materials and tools they use and are aware of the dangers of being silly with cutting tools. They willingly tidy away after lessons.
- 129 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of what they teach. The very good use of questioning, by which the pupils are encouraged to reflect critically on their work and extend their understanding is a strength. The linking of lessons to previous work leads the pupils to value their designs and to improve them through thoughtful discussion. As a result pupils show a high level of interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
- 130 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. It is based on good planning, good knowledge of the subject and effective organisation of resources. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson on photo-frame making, for example, where a good range of materials and examples of frames were available for pupils to examine. This led to some inspiring ideas; the pupils were quick to engage in their work, maintaining a good pace throughout the lesson. Questioning is used well to support pupils' work and extend their understanding. The setting of clear expectations for behaviour and for the standard of work expected at the start of lessons leads to good progress in the development of work in lessons. Teachers make good use of information communications technology.

- 131 The assessment of pupils' attainment informs planning well. The subject is very well led through the provision of very good guidance and support for the teachers. Since the previous inspection resources have been updated and improved with a very good range of tools, materials and construction kits now available. The standard of pupils' work and the quality of teaching and of the management of the subject have also improved.

GEOGRAPHY

- 132 The overall standards of seven year-olds in geography are very good. Pupils have very good knowledge of their local environment and use appropriate geographical vocabulary. The pupils' knowledge and skills are rapidly developed through progressively challenging local fieldwork. This is supported by very good use of resources. Pupils confidently use aerial photos, large-scale maps and plans, and show a good level of skill in recording information and drawing routes from home to school. The highest-attaining pupils include standardised symbols and show the correct position of key features. Information communications technology is used well to help record and handle information. There is very good awareness of the function of local buildings. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 2, through modelling and discussion, consider how improvements can be made to their local environment. Pupils' knowledge of world maps is extended through some focused work. Pupils ask clear geographical questions when exploring the local environment, for example, 'What is this place like?' and 'What do you like about it?', Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in both knowledge and skills.
- 133 The overall standards of 11 year-olds are good. Pupils, in Key Stage 2, continue to improve their skills in map-work, using ordnance survey maps and a range of other maps in differing scales including world maps, atlases and globes. These they use well to interpret relief features and to compare localities. The study of other localities, including localities in France, enables pupils to compare and contrast places. Pupils become increasingly aware of how places fit into a wider geographical and regional context. They demonstrate a good understanding of how physical environments, such as mountains, affect human activities. Pupils record their observations accurately. Writing shows a good use of geographical vocabulary. Pupils use information communications technology to extend their work through web searches, in data handling and general presentation. The highest-attaining pupils write clearly, identifying geographical relationships. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous levels of knowledge.
- 134 The pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They particularly enjoy exploring their local environment. They see the point of what they study and develop a strong sense of personal responsibility for preserving the environment. They behave very well in lessons and establish excellent relationships with one another and their teachers.
- 135 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is very good. The teachers have a good knowledge of geography and of how to teach it. They use questioning very effectively to engage pupils' interest and to extend their geographical vocabulary. This was illustrated in a follow-up lesson to a local walk when hand-held photographs and aerial photographs allowed a very good level of discussion and interrogation of resources. Teachers introduce lessons clearly providing very clear instructions. They

reveal high expectations in the level of challenge set in the tasks. Marking of pupils' work is careful and indicates clearly how well pupils are achieving and how they might improve.

- 136 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. Teachers plan lessons well. They are well organised and use a good range of interesting and appropriate resources. This was clearly evident, for example, in a Years 4 and 5 class when the pupils were comparing Maidstone and Paris. Access to large-scale maps and textbooks graded according to different levels of attainment ensured that all pupils were involved to the full extent of their competence. Effective questioning supported and extended pupils' understanding. Teachers make good use of information communications technology. For example, in a Year 6 class on the Himalayas the pupils confidently and productively engaged in a web search. Marking is thorough and gives attention to geographical content providing clear feedback to pupils.
- 137 The subject is very well managed and led. The co-ordinator has begun monitoring the standards of achievement and teaching in the school. Since the previous inspection the quality of resources has been improved considerably. There is now a very good range of maps and globes supported by relevant textbooks and photographs for local and distant studies. The results of the assessment of pupils' work are used well to inform planning of lessons and the curriculum. The quality of teaching and of pupils' work has also improved since the last inspection.

HISTORY

- 138 Judgements are based on the few lessons seen, on discussion with pupils and staff and on the examination of pupils' work.
- 139 Pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing their knowledge of the past at a steady rate. Whilst listening to the accounts of the past by a visitor, Year 1 pupils compare toys of the past with the toys they play with today. They notice that whilst some toys have remained popular, the material that they are made of has usually changed. They know that in the past many toys were made at home. Pupils in Year 2 use research skills to produce good historical accounts about toys in the past.
- 140 Pupils in Key Stage 2 are gradually increasing their understanding of the feelings of the people in the historical period being studied. In Years 3 and 4 pupils compare historical accounts about Boudicca and give reasons for their differences showing empathy with those who lived at the time. They write in the role of a Roman or Celt and state opposing viewpoints. Pupils in Year 5 use role-play to emulate life in Victorian times. They give considered reasons for the evacuation of children to country areas during the Second World War and use artefacts from the period to draw historical conclusions.
- 141 Pupils enjoy history, particularly when it involves real enquiry, for example, when investigating the history of toys. They work very well together in groups and behave very well in lessons. They take a real interest in the history of the immediate locality and enjoy meeting some of the local residents who experienced the war.
- 142 The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good. Teachers are skilful at using questioning techniques, which allow pupils to reflect and extend their ideas. The use of visitors to talk to Key Stage 1 pupils about their experiences enables younger pupils to develop greater understanding. Teachers adapt the work to the needs of pupils and this means that pupils at all levels of attainment achieve well. The ends of

lessons are used well to clarify pupils' thinking and to draw conclusions about what has been learned.

- 143 Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in curricular planning. Teachers are clear about what is to be taught and learned. The purchase of a good range of artefacts has enhanced the opportunities available to pupils to study primary source material and has improved the quality of their learning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 144 During the week of the inspection information communications technology was seen in the context of all lessons. Judgements are supported by the analysis of pupils' work, discussions with staff and pupils and the inspection of the school's documentation.
- 145 The overall attainment of seven year-olds is good. Pupils, at this age, have a good level of confidence and understanding of equipment and its applications to their work. They generate and communicate information with increasing skill to support early writing and mathematical work. In Year 2, there is some very good use of software in music with which pupils work confidently to produce their own compositions. There is good progress achieved in lessons and over time from reception onwards; pupils increasingly enter and present information. There is good use of information communications technology to support achievement in literacy and numeracy. Pupils use cameras and tape recorders well. Logo and Turtle are used effectively to introduce control and modelling. Pupils with special educational needs show good progress in both knowledge and skills.
- 146 The overall attainment of 11 year-olds is good. Pupils continue to show progress in their general confidence and understanding of equipment and processes. Year 4 pupils insert pictures into text. Pupils in Year 6 create a range of newspaper front pages in colour. Information communications technology is used in most subjects in word processing and data handling, particularly in geography, religious education and mathematics. Accuracy of modelling and control, as reflected in work on fairgrounds in Year 6, indicates a rapid development of skills. Year 6 pupils use the recently installed web access to good effect in geography; they search for information and download it competently. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the subject.
- 147 Pupils take a real interest in computers. They do not just treat them as sophisticated toys but are eager to take advantage of the ways they support learning. For example, they use the Internet independently to research their topics and regularly consult information from CD ROMs. They behave very well when working at the computers and take care of this expensive resource.
- 148 Limited direct teaching was seen as pupils generally worked without direct support at both key stages. This was helped by careful instructions available for pupils in the suite areas and by teachers giving clear initial instructions, especially at Key Stage 1. Where the suites were in use, the pupils were supportive of each other and much teaching by peers was seen, with a high standard of helpful suggestion and support.
- 149 Since the previous inspection, resources have been considerably extended, improved and re-organised, culminating in the creation of three new suites, with six computers in each. This has led to improved teaching and learning. The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator is new to the post and has made a very effective start in the

monitoring of standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 150 Judgements are based on the one lesson taught to a Years 3 and 4 class, inspection of supporting documentation and on some evidence from the preliminary visit to the school.
- 151 Conversational French is taught to all the pupils in Key Stage 2, though it is not part of the National Curriculum for primary schools. Standards of pronunciation are very good, as the pupils are encouraged to persist in speaking French throughout the lessons. High expectations for accuracy in grammar and pronunciation are communicated in the way the teacher insists on increasingly demanding uses of the language. Pupils are confident in engaging in simple conversations and are very well taught. A real strength is the high quality of the teachers' own language use. The pupils develop increasing fluency and speak at greater length through well structured practices and the very good use of a good range of stimulating resources. The pupils enjoy using French and they look forward to having the opportunity to use the language in France.
- 152 The good standards of spoken French and the very good teaching experienced by the pupils have been maintained since the previous inspection

MUSIC

- 153 There were very limited opportunities to observe lessons during the inspection. However, the work seen in one lesson, the extra-curricular activities, audio recording, teachers' planning and talking with pupils indicate that progress across the key stages is good. Pupils have good opportunities to experience and develop their skills in performing, composing, listening and appraising. They enjoy the lessons and activities and join in enthusiastically.
- 154 Pupils develop their understanding of the musical elements quickly and apply their understanding to their own composing to good effect. For example, Year 1 pupils make up short patterns of long and short sounds and record these, using simple graphic symbols. They work well together in groups, making decisions regarding the order of duration and choice of instruments. They explain clearly the organisation of their music and perform accurately from their written scores.
- 155 In Key Stage 2, pupils are provided with songs which reflect different cultures; for example, calypso, and develop their skills in singing in parts. They are keen to practise and refine their work. Year 6 compose their own rhythms based on grouping of beats. These are performed from graphic notation, using body sounds. They have good opportunities to listen to and appraise music. They talk about Mussorgsky's work, 'Night on the Bare Mountain', in terms of the mood created and how this is affected by the tempo. They have good opportunities to respond to music through art and dance.
- 156 The pupils enjoy music and sing with great gusto in assemblies and in choir. The very young pupils are particularly good at responding to the rhythm of the songs they sing. They behave well in lessons and in choir and they are careful to follow the teachers' instructions.

- 157 The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers make good use of the published scheme of work to support their teaching. Where work focuses on developing pupils' understanding of the musical elements, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to apply these in a musical context. All pupils have the opportunity to learn the recorder and there is a number of groups working at different levels. The choir is open to all pupils irrespective of attainment. Pupils have good opportunities to learn the piano or keyboard and teachers from the local education authority music service provide lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in school performances both in and out of school. For example, pupils accompany the singing in assembly; they also sing and play in the Christmas concert. The school regularly participates in the Maidstone Primary Schools' Recorder Festival and Carol Service.
- 158 The subject is well led. The music co-ordinator has recently taken on the role but has a clear sense of purpose and direction for the development of the subject. She has a good understanding of the strengths and less well-developed aspects that have informed the key targets identified in the action plan for the development of music.
- 159 The school has maintained the good standards of work and the good quality of teaching noted in the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 160 By the age of 11, the pupils have experienced a good range of activities, including gymnastics, dance, athletics, outdoor and adventurous activities and competitive sport and games. The level of success in inter-school competitive activities would suggest a good standard is achieved for a school of this size. Records show that pupils are on target to swim unaided, competently and safely for at least 25 metres by the age of 11 years. Pupils respond imaginatively to various challenges offered in dance and gymnastics, both in lessons and in the gymnastics club. The standard of country dancing is good. All pupils move fluently and accurately to music and sustain the structure of the dances. They practise, improve and refine their efforts. They reach good standards in performing and in planning sequences in dance and gymnastics. In the evaluation of their work, they use much of the appropriate language to identify and describe features of their performances. They sustain energetic activity over a good period of time and demonstrate a sound knowledge of what happens to their bodies during exercise. They prepare for and recover from vigorous activity through engagement in appropriate warm-up and cool-down exercises. They understand and apply the principles of safety to their work, particularly when moving across large apparatus.
- 161 Through a very good range of well-structured games lessons, pupils show good skills in controlling the ball and in passing and receiving when moving. In netball, mostly played by girls, the great majority shows a sound level of accuracy in shooting, with a few demonstrating a high level of skill. In football, played mostly by boys, there is good ball control and accuracy in passing. A few boys have very good skills for their ages. Both boys and girls show a keen interest in touch rugby. Most control the ball and pass with a reasonable level of accuracy.

- 162 Seven year-olds reach good standards across the range of activities offered. In gymnastics, they link and repeat their balances and actions smoothly and imaginatively both on the floor and on large apparatus. In games, nearly all pupils practise good basic techniques, such as moving their bodies to the ball and using their eyes carefully when aiming or receiving. The very young children skip and run competently. They are unusually good at balancing and stretching in gymnastics. The higher-attaining pupils show good extension of legs and arms in their gymnastic patterns.
- 163 Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils show enjoyment and enthusiasm for physical education. Behaviour in lessons is always good. Pupils work quietly, concentrating on their tasks; they know the importance of keeping active as they practise and refine their work. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes and self-control for their ages, particularly in gymnastic lessons. In all lessons they show respect for each other's space when moving around and they participate safely in all activities. They follow the rules sensibly in simple competitive games. They are eager to talk about their work, to evaluate the quality of what they are achieving and to refine and improve their sequences and skills.
- 164 The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge of what they teach and this shows itself in the quality of planning and in their skill in providing sequences of activities that are progressively challenging. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenges provided. This was clearly evident in the teaching of gymnastics in all years when the pupils were encouraged to practise and refine their patterns of movement, sometimes to the point of perfection. The teachers encourage pupils to extend their skills on challenging apparatus, when many reveal an imaginative grasp of how to sequence movements. Lessons are planned carefully with a good structure that allows for warming up and a calm activity to recover at the end of the lesson. In all lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment, revealed in the attention to the level of challenge in the sequence of activities. Good use is made of demonstrations to improve performance. The management of behaviour is very good. Assessment is used satisfactorily to determine pupils' skill levels and teachers provide clear feedback to individual pupils on their performances.
- 165 A strength of teaching is the consistent emphasis on engaging pupils in the evaluation of their performances. As a consequence, pupils' confidence in talking about their work develops well. From early in Year 1 pupils handle apparatus safely. They show an increasing capacity for following instructions carefully and quickly improve the quality of the shapes they create. Pupils with special educational needs and those who attain at high levels make good progress in the quality of their work. The teaching of dance is a particular strength. This was clearly evident in a lesson in Year 6, where the work is rooted in the teacher's good knowledge of the subject and clear and consistent expectations for behaviour and working practices. The teacher skilfully presented the structure of the various dances, supported very well-organised practices and encouraged them to attempt the very complex pattern of the dance 'Strip the Willow'. The pupils rose to the occasion and showed a good awareness of the rhythm of the music and the structure of the dance.
- 166 The provision for physical education is well led. The co-ordinator provides good support to other teachers and offers a clear sense of direction for the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 167 Judgements are based on the inspection of three lessons, the analysis of pupils' work, and discussions with staff and pupils.
- 168 The overall standards of seven year-olds in religious education are above the level expected in the Kent Agreed Syllabus for the provision of religious education. Pupils have a good understanding of the place of religious stories and celebrations in the lives of believers. They recognise essential religious characters, events and symbols, especially those of Christianity. They are aware of other world religions, especially Hinduism. They understand the joy of a new arrival in the family and how it is celebrated in different cultures. They discuss their experiences and their own feelings. They organise their thoughts and present ideas sensitively. Pupils' work on display shows thought and careful consideration in selecting and writing. This is evident, for example, in their writing on 'My special place'. Pupils write well in religious education and engage in some lively discussion at this stage. They show a growing understanding of key topics. This was evident, for example, in Year 2, in the pupils' understanding of the Christmas story and the symbolic significance of light in people's lives. Pupils with special educational needs and the higher-attaining pupils achieve well in relation to their prior understanding.
- 169 The overall standards of 11 year-olds' knowledge and understanding are good. Pupils extend their general understanding of religions, including Islam, its beliefs, practices and places of worship. The standards of writing are high and for the highest-attaining pupils, excellent. Again, as for Key Stage 1, the pupils engage in a good level of thoughtful discussion and reflect on the personal implications of moral issues. This was evident, for example, in a Years 4 and 5 lesson on forgiveness in which pupils raised good questions and referred the principles to personal experience. Pupils at all levels of attainment contributed productively. Pupils write well for a range of purposes, for example, they write their own prayers.
- 170 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. Teachers know their subject well. They link lessons effectively to previous work. They encourage pupils to express their own ideas. Through skilful questioning, they help them to clarify their ideas. As a result pupils show a high level of interest and make links across topics that extend the breadth of their understanding. The teachers' written comments on work are helpful in reminding pupils about how well they are achieving.
- 171 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good, as reflected in the level of planning and organisation and especially in the level of careful questioning and discussion that occurs. Pupils are encouraged to examine their own lives to find examples that illustrate a general moral principle. The analysis of work shows a good level of assessment. As a consequence, written work is thoughtful and well presented.
- 172 The subject is very well led. Since the previous inspection the monitoring of the curriculum and of teaching has been developed; it is now good. There are good procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress and these are used well to inform the planning of lessons and the religious education curriculum. This was a weakness noted in the previous inspection. Resources have been updated and improved, with a very good range of books and artefacts now available.