

INSPECTION REPORT

SUTTON VALENCE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118314

Headteacher: Mr N Moore

Reporting inspector: Carole Skinner
23160

Dates of inspection: 30th April - 2nd May 2001

Inspection number: 191356

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	North Street Sutton Valence Maidstone Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Sutton Valence Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Sanders
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23160	Carole Skinner	Registered inspector	English, music, the Foundation Stage curriculum, English as an additional language.	The school's results and the pupils' achievements. How well is the school led and managed?
9542	Brian Jones	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20704	Terry Elston	Team inspector	Mathematics, history, physical education.	How well are pupils taught?
19897	Arthur Evans	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology, geography.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14596	Tony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Science, art, religious education, special educational needs, equal opportunities.	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sutton Valence Primary School educates boys and girls aged between four and 11 years. There are 203 pupils on roll, which is about the same size as other primary schools. There are similar numbers of boys and girls. Twenty-eight children attend full-time in the Foundation Stage. The school has 34 pupils on its register of special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average. Two pupils have statements of special educational need, which is also average. Approximately one per cent of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is similar to most schools. Five pupils speak English as an additional language, which is above average. Almost ten per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. During the last school year, 13 pupils joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission, and three left it at times that were not those of the normal leaving or transfer for most pupils. Pupils enter the school at average levels of attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with several very good features. The leadership and management of the school are good and the quality of teaching is good, overall. These factors have given rise to improving standards. In March 2001, the school was officially recognised by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment as having substantially improved results over the previous four years. The findings of the inspection show that the school has continued to achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. However, there are weaknesses in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and information and communication technology at Key Stage 2. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The good leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, other staff with management responsibilities and the governors promote high and improving standards for the pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good, overall, and helps pupils to make good progress.
- The pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good and have a positive impact on learning.
- The school makes very good provision for the pupils' moral and social development, and good provision for their spiritual and cultural development.
- The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare, which makes them secure and confident learners.
- The school's very good relationships with parents greatly assist pupils to make good progress.

What could be improved

- The standards which pupils attain in mathematics at Key Stage 1, which are currently below average, especially for the more able pupils.
- Although the teaching of information and communication technology is good at Key Stage 2, standards are below average because the school does not yet have sufficient resources to teach all elements of the National Curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997, and, since then, it has made a good improvement. The findings of the last inspection indicated that the standards attained by the pupils at Key Stage 2 required some improvement. There has been a marked improvement in the standards achieved in national tests for 11 year olds since 1997, and in 2000, the school's results were above average in English, mathematics and science. The findings of this inspection show that high standards are being maintained at Key Stage 2. Standards have risen because the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 has improved significantly over the same period and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are much higher. The leadership and management of the school have also improved, as the process of planning for school improvement has become more effective. Better monitoring procedures help staff and governors to identify priorities for development and put strategies in place to address them. This process also makes good use of detailed analysis of pupils' results in national and internal tests. Staff work very well together as a team and have a shared commitment to raising standards. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	B	C	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	B	B	B	
science	A	B	B	B	

Over the past five years, the school's results at Key Stage 2 have shown a significant improvement, especially in English, where they have risen from well below average in 1997 to above average in 2000. Standards in mathematics have risen from average to above average over the same period, and those in science have remained above average. The school comfortably exceeded its targets for the percentage of pupils expected to reach Level 4 and above in the tests in English and mathematics in 2000, and approximately 40 per cent reached the higher Level 5 in both subjects, which was well above the national average. The school has set demanding targets for pupils in the current Year 6 and is on course to achieve them. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 6, standards are above average in English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, science, history, music and religious education. Standards are average in all other subjects except information and communication technology, where they are below average. This is because the school does not have sufficient resources to teach every aspect of the subject. The judgements of the inspection reflect the school's national test results and show that high standards are being maintained. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well.

In Year 2, the findings of the inspection are that standards are above average in religious education and music, and below average in mathematics. They are average in all other subjects. Standards in mathematics are low because pupils are given too few opportunities to develop the deeper understanding of mathematics needed to achieve higher levels. Standards in handwriting and

presentation are also below average. Children in the Foundation Stage are on course to achieve above average standards in personal, social and emotional development, and average standards in all other areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. There has been a noticeable improvement during the past term.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to learn. They maintain very high levels of concentration and show interest and enjoyment in all they do. Pupils eagerly take on extra work and projects.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtime. They show respect for adults and one another and welcome visitors with courtesy.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for jobs around the school. They work and play very well together and have a good understanding of the effect of their actions on others. Older pupils are very considerate of the younger pupils in the playground.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is higher than the national average.

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their behaviour have a very good effect on the quality of their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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 quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and promotes good progress through the school. During the inspection, 98 per cent of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and 16 per cent was very good or excellent. Two per cent (one lesson) was unsatisfactory. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 2, where 90 per cent of the teaching was at least good and 24 per cent was very good. The major strengths of the teaching are the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects, the way they relate to and manage the pupils, and the good quality of teachers' planning. A relative weakness at Key Stage 1 is that teachers do not always stretch the most able pupils sufficiently. The quality of teaching in English, including literacy skills, is good throughout the school. In mathematics, including numeracy skills, teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory at Key Stage 1. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils clearly how to improve their work. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs, and for those who speak English as an additional language, is good and enables them to make good progress. The school meets the needs of pupils well, except for some more able pupils in Year 2. The quality of learning reflects

the quality of teaching at each key stage. The best features are the pupils' interest, concentration and independence in learning, and the intellectual, physical and creative effort that they apply to their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The school is implementing the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well, particularly at Key Stage 2, where they are already having a significant impact on standards. The curriculum in information and communication technology does not meet statutory requirements. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and a good range of extracurricular activities. The school makes very good use of its links with the community to extend pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school devises good targets and support for pupils who have special educational needs. They make good progress towards their targets. Most support is given in lessons but some pupils are given extra help in small groups, which are well organised.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Teachers provide good support for these pupils in class and a visiting specialist helps to accelerate their acquisition of language. This helps them to make good progress in learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' spiritual awareness is fostered well through assemblies and religious education. Provision for moral development is very good and teachers encourage pupils to respect each other and other people's beliefs and customs. The school provides very well for pupils' social development through a variety of clubs and after school activities. Good provision for cultural development is evident in a number of areas of the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school places a high priority on providing a safe and happy environment, and it cares for its pupils very well. Monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is good, and the school provides good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. There are good procedures for checking the attainment and progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science. There are no formal, whole school procedures for assessment in other subjects.

Good provision for pupils' personal development enhances the well-planned curriculum. The school does not have the equipment to teach every aspect of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology. The school works very effectively in partnership with parents. However,

there is no information about the school's provision for special educational needs in the governors' Annual Report to parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very clear direction for the school and has already implemented effective strategies to raise standards. Co-ordinators have a clear understanding of their role, though some are new to it, and all are involved in identifying and planning for future developments in their subjects. They are developing their role in monitoring standards and the curriculum appropriately.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strong points and where improvement is required. They make a good contribution to planning for school improvement and evaluating the success of initiatives undertaken. The headteacher is working with them to increase the effectiveness of their monitoring role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher, governors and senior management team analyse the school's results in national and internal tests and use the information gained to determine priorities for improvement. The headteacher and some co-ordinators effectively monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are used well to support teaching and learning. The headteacher is making good use of the school's surplus funds to address weaknesses in information and communication technology and to improve the learning environment. The principles of best value are applied well.

The school is well staffed and its accommodation and resources are adequate to support the teaching of the curriculum. The headteacher is supported well by governors and staff with management responsibilities and is working closely with them to develop their roles and increase their effectiveness.

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 has high expectations of their children. • They feel comfortable approaching the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework provided. • The information they are given about their children's progress.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with questions or problems. • The quality of teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • Behaviour is good. • Their children make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extracurricular activities offered to the pupils.
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The findings of the inspection agree with the positive views expressed by the parents. In addition, they show that pupils are given regular and appropriate amounts of work to complete at home, and these tasks are helping them to make good progress. The information that is given to parents about their children's progress is of good quality, and the school offers pupils a good range of activities outside of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage at average levels of attainment. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good, although other evidence indicates that this has improved as the year has progressed and as the newly qualified teacher has gained more experience and received good support and training. As a result, children have made satisfactory progress overall, and are on course to reach average standards by the end of the Reception year in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In personal, social and emotional development, where teaching has been consistently good, children are on course to achieve above average standards by the end of the year. In the school's previous inspection, standards were found to be above average in all areas of learning. Children are confident and have formed good relationships with each other and with adults. They show a keen interest in stories and listen carefully for extended periods of time. Children are able to retell the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* with the events in the right order. They enjoy making attempts at writing and are developing a good awareness of how sounds and letters match. Children recognise numbers up to 12 and put them in the correct order, but find adding two numbers together difficult.

2. In the end of Key Stage 1 tests in 2000, standards were average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. In science, the assessments made by teachers in 2000 were average. In reading and mathematics, standards have fallen since 1997, but are better than in 1998. Standards in writing have improved. When compared with the results achieved by similar schools, standards were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. In reading and mathematics, too few pupils achieved higher than average standards. In reading, writing and mathematics, there has been a marked decline in boys' achievements since 1997, compared to an improvement in girls' scores. The school has now identified raising boys' attainment in reading as a priority in the school improvement plan. This does not, however, identify standards in mathematics as a priority. Raising attainment in writing has been identified as a whole school issue.

3. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, the pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and science, and below average standards in mathematics, including numeracy. These standards reflect the pupils' achievements in the national tests in 2000, but are lower than those seen at the time of the last inspection, when they were judged to be above average. The findings of this inspection are that standards are above average in religious education and music and average in all other subjects. Compared with the findings of the previous inspection, standards are now higher in

religious education, and lower in design and technology, geography, art and physical education. High standards have been maintained in music.

4. In Year 2, pupils attain average standards in speaking and listening. They listen attentively and speak confidently and audibly when asking and answering questions. Most pupils read simple texts accurately and with understanding. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds to work out unfamiliar words, though some need prompting to do this. More able pupils read confidently and with good expression and readily tackle more demanding texts. Average attaining pupils in Year 2 have a growing awareness of how to structure a story and use an appropriate range of vocabulary to hold the reader's interest. They are beginning to use capital letters and full stops correctly to demarcate sentences. A few able pupils have progressed well throughout the year and are now writing lengthy, well organised, and often imaginative stories and descriptions, sometimes using paragraphs and speech marks correctly. The basic grammatical structure of sentences is usually accurate, and pupils make plausible attempts at spelling some complex words. Although the school's policy for handwriting states that joined handwriting is taught from the end of Year 1, this is not done consistently, with the result that standards in handwriting and presentation are below average by the age of seven. A careful analysis of the pupils' work in all subjects shows that pupils in Year 2 do not have enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. Pupils enter the school with mathematical skills that are weak compared with other areas, and, although most attain nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2, few move on to exceed them. This is because they are given too few opportunities to develop the deeper understanding of mathematics needed to achieve higher levels. Pupils have sound mental recall of some of the addition and subtraction facts to ten and they order numbers correctly up to 100 and beyond. Overall, however, pupils' numeracy skills are below average. They round numbers up and down with reasonable skill, but many struggle when asked which way they have rounded. Few have a good feel for number, and they often make basic mistakes when counting. Pupils solve simple money problems, use centimetres to measure length and tell the time well. They attain above average standards when conducting surveys and producing neat block graphs of their results. Pupils' use of mathematics by Year 2 is below average. Many quickly become confused when asked to turn a sum around to check its accuracy, or interpret a problem when it is couched in unfamiliar language. In science, pupils in Year 2 carry out experiments and record their findings appropriately. They understand human growth and note the developments that take place from a baby at five months old to a child at five years. They know that plants need water and light in order to grow, sort materials into categories and understand how simple electrical circuits work.

5. In art, pupils in Year 2 have made stencils from polystyrene tiles and used them for single coloured designs. They look carefully at what they are drawing or painting and ask themselves good questions about form and pattern, with teachers' help. By the age of seven, most pupils are gaining confidence in using computers and communicate their ideas using text and pictures. With help from adults, they select and change fonts. By the age of seven, pupils have made a variety of moving vehicles in design and technology, using different materials and joining techniques. They follow their design sheets as closely as possible. In geography, pupils have a sound knowledge of features within the locality. They talk about attractive and unattractive features of the village and about how the school environment might be made safer. In history, pupils show sound early research skills and have a suitably developed sense of chronology for their age. They learn to use vocabulary indicating an awareness of the passing of time and discuss some of the ways in which objects, such as toy cars, can be 'old' and 'new'. In music, pupils create a musical pattern and explore how to use different parts of the body for percussion. They select and organise sounds to create their own composition, which they record on paper, using a key to identify their chosen symbols. By Year 2, pupils combine running, jumping and walking movements into suitable sequences with appropriate levels of co-ordination. Their games skills are average. Pupils in Year 2 know about the Jewish Passover meal and the Torah. They explain the events that are celebrated on Palm Sunday.

6. In the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2000, the pupils' results were higher than the national average in English, mathematics and science. They were also higher than the average for similar schools. Standards have risen significantly in English and mathematics since 1997 and have remained above average in science. There has been a particularly good improvement in the standards reached by more able pupils, with around 40 per cent of the year group exceeding national expectations in the subjects. The school exceeded its targets for the percentage of pupils to reach Level 4 (the national average for 11 year olds) in English and mathematics, and has set appropriately challenging targets for the current Year 6 to achieve in the 2001 tests.

7. The findings of the inspection also show above average attainment in English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, and science. Standards are also above average in history, music and religious education. They are below average in information and communication technology and average in design and technology, geography, art and physical education.

8. At Key Stage 2, standards in speaking and listening are above average. Pupils continue to be active and responsive listeners. They participate in discussions with confidence and enthusiasm and express their ideas and opinions articulately. Pupils continue to develop an interest in and enthusiasm for books. By Year 6, they read with fluency and accuracy and express clear opinions about their favourite books. Pupils use skimming and scanning techniques to find information from different texts. They write in an interesting and challenging variety of forms. These include imaginative writing in the first person, factual writing, play scripts, poems, book reviews and instructional texts. The best writing shows a good command of style and expression. The writing of some below average pupils is still immature in style and content and contains many spelling and punctuation errors. More able pupils, including both boys and girls, have produced work of a very high standard, which engages and sustains the reader's interest and attention. By the age of 11, pupils have made good progress, particularly in developing numeracy skills. They work confidently with large numbers, and add, subtract, multiply and divide accurately. Their work on probability is good, and they use words such as 'fair' and 'likely' appropriately in their work. Pupils' work on co-ordinates is particularly good, and they plot shapes accurately in all four quadrants. They have a good understanding of perimeter, areas of triangles and the characteristics of three-dimensional shapes. In science, pupils carry out investigations with a good awareness of how to conduct a fair test. They record results in a systematic and scientific way, and include predictions, measurements and findings. Pupils always compare their predictions with their findings, and this enhances their understanding of the investigation they have done. Year 6 pupils understand gravity and the upthrust exerted on objects by water. They know how light travels and can be deflected, and they understand terms such as 'opaque' and 'reflection'. In their work on electricity, pupils understand some of the issues about safety, and they use correct symbols in their diagrams.

9. In design and technology, by the age of eleven, most pupils have a sound understanding of the design process as they clarify their ideas using technical vocabulary and clearly labelled diagrams, with accurate measurements. In history, they have a good depth of factual knowledge and understanding of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Tudor times and the Royal Family in Britain. They have a clear insight into the way that people lived at different periods and the important events that shaped their lives. When working with computers, pupils confidently communicate and handle information using text, graphs and pictures and they are able to load, save, print and retrieve work. However, they have insufficient opportunities for control, modelling or monitoring change, and attainment is below average in these areas. In music, pupils explore how lyrics can be generated and organised and how musical structures are used in songs. They identify how repetition can make the words and melody easier to remember. Whilst pupils' skills in all areas of physical education are average, their level of fitness is below that normally found, and many quickly become out of breath. In games, they work hard at

developing skills associated with balls, and throw, control and hit them with average skill. In religious education, pupils have a good understanding of Sikhism and the symbolism of the 'Five K's'.

10. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. These targets, which are well chosen by teachers according to pupils' needs, are reviewed every term. Pupils receive good support from teachers and learning assistants, and work is carefully matched to their needs and capabilities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress in their learning as a result of good support from their own teachers and assistants and a visiting specialist, who works with them individually to increase their understanding and fluency.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The school has successfully maintained the high standards of attitudes, behaviour and personal development described in the previous report. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They are very keen to learn. Their attitudes were good or better in more than nine out of ten lessons seen. They maintain very high levels of concentration. Pupils eagerly take on extra work and projects. For example, a Year 2 pupil brought in a detailed, illustrated diary of his holiday visit to the Canary Islands – "to show the others in the class". Other pupils compiled similar diaries of visits to Western Australia and France. Year 6 pupils' independent ideas include measuring magnetic fields with a compass, an experiment to see whether sugar would form crystals, and a complex lighting circuit. Pupils are proud of their school, and enjoy lessons. In the small groups organised to help pupils who have special educational needs, pupils are willing to work and settle quickly. They focus on the aspect of work in hand, and they apply themselves cheerfully to this with help from adults. Children in the Reception class settle very quickly into the routines of the school and are confident and happy. They participate in lessons with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

12. Pupils behave very well in lessons, breaks and at lunchtime. They show respect for adults and one another. They welcome visitors with courtesy. Parents who have accompanied visits say pupils win praise for the quality of their behaviour outside school. Pupils respect the school environment and keep it tidy. There was no challenging behaviour during the inspection. The school excluded two pupils in the previous year but has not excluded any pupil in the year to date. The school's freedom from oppressive behaviour, racism and sexism is very good. The few pupils from ethnic minorities, or with English as an additional language, work and play harmoniously with the other pupils. Bullying is rare and the school resolves it quickly and effectively. A parent whose child suffered bullying at another school says that her child feels safe and happy at this school.

13. Pupils' personal development is very good. Younger pupils act as 'helpers' in their classes. They take their register to the office and assist with resources and tidying up. Older pupils act as 'reading buddies' for the younger pupils. Year 6 pupils become prefects, and help look after the playground at lunchtime. Year 5 pupils serve as librarians. The school's 'green squad' is open to pupils of all ages. Green squad pupils have their own rules for keeping the environment green. They help with the garden, grow plants in the greenhouse to sell at the summer fair and take care of the wildlife area and the pond. To conserve resources, they turn off lights and running taps. Some 25 pupils take tuition in a wide range of musical instruments. Twelve pupils regularly take part in a drama club provided by a local youth theatre. These activities build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

14. Relationships at school are very good. Pupils work and play very well together. Older pupils are very considerate of the younger pupils in the playground. They have a good understanding of the effect of their actions on others. In particular they show great care and consideration for pupils with disabilities. New pupils arriving at school have a special friend to help them settle in. There is a friendship bench in the playground. New friends quickly come forward to help anyone sitting there.

Pupils relate very well to the adults at school. There is a strong feeling that the school plays an important part in the life of the local community and many parents are former pupils of the school.

15. In 1999/2000 pupils achieved the good attendance rate of 95.4 per cent. This is one per cent above the national average. It has improved by two per cent since the previous inspection. Punctuality is good, despite recent difficulties with floods and adverse weather. Virtually all pupils arrive promptly for morning registration. This contributes to a purposeful start to the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and promotes good progress through the school. Nearly all parents agree that the quality of teaching is good, and that it helps their children do well. During the inspection, 49 lessons were observed, of which two per cent were excellent, 16 per cent very good, 64 per cent good, 16 per cent satisfactory and two per cent unsatisfactory. These figures compare well with those of the previous OFSTED inspection, when 16 per cent of lessons, mostly in Years 3 to 6, were unsatisfactory. The biggest improvements lie in teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work and in the pace of lessons in the juniors, both of which help to account for the significant rise in pupils' standards in the national assessment tests for 11 year olds since the previous inspection.

17. The school has done much to make literacy and numeracy lessons effective, and the teaching here is generally good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the national strategies, and comfortable with the division of lessons into direct teaching time, activities for individual pupils or groups and the plenary session. Consequently, pupils make good progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and their results are improving in the national assessment tests at a faster rate than is found nationally.

18. The evidence from observed lessons, children's work, the teacher's planning and discussions with the class teacher and headteacher indicate that the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage has improved from satisfactory to good during the year since September 2000. The Reception teacher is in her first year of teaching and had not received training that was specific to this age group before joining the school. However, the headteacher has ensured that she has received very good support from an external adviser to help her implement the Foundation Stage curriculum and has arranged for her to visit several other schools to observe good practice in early years education. As a result, the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children have increased, as has her awareness of what constitutes good practice in the Reception year. During the inspection, six lessons were observed: one of these was very good, three were good and two were satisfactory. The teacher's planning shows clearly how each area of learning is to be developed within the termly or half-termly topic. However, the planning of opportunities for children to learn through play is still evolving and does not yet always make clear what will be learned or how this will be achieved. A strong feature of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is the partnership between the class teacher and the nursery nurse, who work well together to plan and support children's learning. Both carry out frequent observations of every child and record their assessments once a week in each area of learning. This is good practice, and the information is used well to plan future experiences for the children. Both adults have very good relationships with the children and help to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They make learning interesting and enjoyable while still maintaining firm control and helping children to understand what is expected of them.

19. Some of the best teaching seen was in a lesson that used some of the elements of the National Literacy Strategy. The lesson was brought to life by the teacher's lively and expressive reading of *When Goldilocks went to the house of the bears*. This immediately captured the children's interest, and provided them with a very good model to practise their reading skills, which they did very well

when they read aloud from the large text together. The teacher then deliberately muddled a sequence of pictures telling the story of Goldilocks and what happened at the three bears' house. This created considerable fun and enjoyment as the children eagerly pointed out her mistakes. The two lessons that focused on pupils' mathematical development also contained some good elements, such as using an assortment of practical resources to increase the children's understanding of how to order numbers. However, the planned activities for groups did not always meet the objectives that had been set by the teacher, and, on one occasion, proved too difficult for some of the pupils to manage.

20. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and pupils make steady progress. The best teaching was seen in Year 1, but there was good teaching in both classes. Teachers generally show a very secure knowledge of the subjects they teach, and all make lessons interesting so that pupils enjoy learning. Their direct teaching works well, and promotes pupils' learning of new skills effectively. Their management of pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, but there are some inconsistencies here. In most lessons, and always in Year 1, teachers set clear standards for the way pupils will behave, monitor their work effectively and pupils work productively throughout. Occasionally, however, the teacher spends too much time with one group of pupils, and leaves others with too little support. In one lesson, for example, a group of more able pupils were left to work on their own for too long while the teacher worked almost exclusively with the other group. The pupils without support soon lost concentration and chatted to one another, and, by the end, had completed little of their work. The planning of lessons is satisfactory overall in the infant classes, but while it serves the needs of pupils with average and below average attainment well, it does not always stretch the most able pupils.

21. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is good, and particularly good in Year 5. This is why pupils make such rapid progress in these years, and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they take the national assessment tests in Year 6. Lessons are well planned, and give pupils a good blend of direct teaching to provide them with new skills, challenging activities which stretch all groups of pupils and time at the end for the teacher to assess pupils' progress. More able pupils do particularly well because teachers are always pushing them to deepen their knowledge through research and independent work. The effectiveness of these strategies can be judged by the high proportion of pupils who exceed national expectations in the national assessment tests. Teachers have effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour, and apply their rules consistently. They reward pupils who behave very well in an obvious way, praising them enthusiastically, and this makes all pupils strive for this standard.

22. In Year 5, pupils make particularly good progress. All lessons were at least of good quality and two thirds were very good. Here, the lessons are always challenging and exciting, and are packed with learning. In an excellent lesson, pupils were studying the heart, and the teacher began by exploring their knowledge through skilful questioning. Moving on quickly to a very clear diagram, the teacher then explained with great clarity how the heart works and illustrated the process to pupils' delight by squirting water through a tube. The teacher built on this excitement by introducing role-play at this stage, and had pupils acting as lungs, blood and muscles to show how different organs are important to the heart. The activities that followed had pupils operating pumps, drawing excellent diagrams and researching deeper into the subject through books and computer programs. All this took place at a breathless pace until all had learned an enormous amount about the subject, almost without realising that they had been working.

23. A few parents feel that the provision of homework is unsatisfactory, but this inspection finds that pupils are given regular and appropriate amounts of work to complete at home, and these tasks are helping them to make good progress. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is, however, inconsistent.

While some teachers are careful to include comments to help pupils improve, others confine their marking to ticks or crosses, and this provides them with little guidance.

24. Looking at the different subjects, the quality of teaching in religious education, information and communication technology, history and music is good throughout the school. In English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, science and physical education the quality of teaching is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors where the pace of teaching and learning is faster. In geography, the teaching is good in the infants and satisfactory in the juniors, and in art, and design and technology, the teaching is satisfactory throughout the school.

25. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. Most teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are undertaken in class lessons, and work is provided by the teacher that is more appropriately directed towards those pupils. Pupils receive good support from learning assistants and sometimes other helpers are present. In the extra help groups, pupils receive good teaching and support in groups of about four, and this enables them to make good progress towards their own targets. The quality of teaching and learning for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. They receive good support in lessons and from a visiting specialist teacher, who helps them to make good progress in learning English.

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

26. The school provides a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The range of learning opportunities is somewhat more limited in Key Stage 2, where not all aspects of information and communication technology are currently taught. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Religious education conforms with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and the school meets its obligations to provide a daily act of collective worship. Total weekly teaching time is broadly in line with national recommendations. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics. The school is implementing the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well. At Key Stage 2, this implementation is proving very effective in raising standards. Provision for music is a strength of the curriculum. Currently, four pupils also take advantage of paid instrumental music tuition.

27. Clear policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects. The teachers plan carefully for the work that the pupils will do each term, and this ensures that opportunities for progression in the pupils' learning as they move up through the school are good. Weekly planning for English and mathematics closely follows guidance in the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Planning for other subjects is based on nationally recommended schemes of work. The teachers have not yet begun to adapt these schemes to the particular needs of the school. The headteacher monitors the curriculum carefully through a scrutiny of teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work and through lesson observations.

28. The headteacher has sought professional advice regarding the implementation of the Foundation Stage curriculum, as there are no teachers on the staff who have been trained specifically to teach the Reception year. As a result of some very good support during the spring term, the Reception teacher has planned and is implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum well. The planned curriculum addresses all areas of learning and makes effective provision for children at different levels of attainment. However, the opportunities for children to learn through play, both in the classroom and in the outdoor area, are not yet fully developed.

29. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is good and they are fully integrated into all aspects of the school. Learning support assistants work well with pupils who need the extra help in classes and in some small groups where pupils are withdrawn for additional support. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils who have special educational needs, and class teachers provide appropriate targets for pupils' individual education plans. These are reviewed every term. The standards reported at the last inspection about the provision for pupils who have special educational needs have been maintained across all levels in the school.

30. Although a significant proportion of parents feel that there is an insufficient range of activities outside lessons, the findings of the inspection are that provision for extracurricular activities is good. There are clubs for football, netball, athletics, running, dance and drama. Occasional matches are played against other schools. Two pupils represented Kent at running. There is a choir and three recorder clubs and, in the autumn term, an outdoor club. Some of these activities are open to pupils in Key Stage 1 as well as those in Key Stage 2. Teachers enhance learning by organising worthwhile visits within the locality and to places further afield.

31. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education. It makes good use of 'circle time' and assemblies to help pupils understand how to care for themselves and others. Science lessons play an important part in pupils' learning about healthy lifestyles. Pupils in Year 2 discuss what are 'good' and 'bad' drugs. A theatre group recently presented a drama for pupils in Years 5 and 6 on the dangers of illegal drugs. This role play stimulated lively discussion in follow-up lessons seen during the inspection. The school provides sex education lessons for pupils in Years 5 and 6, using a BBC video. The school has made a good start to helping pupils learn about citizenship. It has prepared for the General Election by getting materials from the Houses of Parliament. Pupils will stand as candidates and seek votes in the school's own mock election.

32. The school makes very good use of its links with the community to extend pupils' learning. Pupils have put together a magnificent display of photographs of houses, shops and street scenes in the village now and in the past. Residents tell them about famous people who have lived in the village. Two local artists worked with the younger pupils to create a mural showing a tropical jungle and underwater life. A computer specialist comes in twice a week from the Medway Business Partnership. Pupils visit local farms and allotments. The school has strong links with St Mary's Church and pupils regularly attend services there. Students from Kent Music School gave a concert in the school. Local children's writers stimulate pupils' interest in reading in 'book week'. Professional theatre groups perform on topics that range from the Tudors to the Electricity Show.

33. Schools in the area work very well together. The school has good relationships with the nearby nursery school. It has developed a strong and effective partnership with local secondary schools. A secondary school has agreed to provide training for the school's staff when the new computer suite comes into operation. The adjacent independent school gives very wide-ranging support. It invites pupils from Sutton Valence Primary to see dramatic and musical productions. Students doing community service come to hear pupils read and work with them in the classroom. They help the school's 'green squad' with gardening, the pond and the bird boxes.

34. Pupils' very good behaviour and their positive attitudes to school are founded on the school's good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, although high standards have been maintained since the last inspection, there is still no focused planning to develop pupils' awareness of Britain's multicultural society. This is a criticism that was also made in the last report.

35. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Acts of worship in the school are lively occasions with good singing and well focused messages. For example, one assembly was about heroes in religion. When pupils were asked to name some of their heroes, one pupil suggested David Beckham. The qualities of a hero were then discussed, and the pupils considered how Jesus fulfilled all the qualities mentioned, such as going out of his way to help others. The assemblies usually end with some quiet reflection and a prayer. Other world faiths are studied in religious education, and pupils learn how to respect the faith and its practices. In one religious education lesson in Year 4, pupils thought about the feelings of the disciples after the death of Jesus and suggested words such as 'sad', 'lonely', and 'impatient'. Music helps considerably towards this spiritual development and the singing assembly lifted everyone's spirits on a rainy day. In science, pupils' attention is drawn to the wonder of the natural world and there is much work to be seen about plants, animals and seasons.

36. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. There are clear expectations for good behaviour and pupils have a hand in formulating class rules. Routines for whole school gatherings, such as assemblies and lunchtimes, are well established and pupils come to and leave assemblies in a very quiet and orderly way. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and teachers encourage them to show respect to each other, and to other people in and around the school. In the religious education lessons observed, pupils were reminded to respect the beliefs and customs of those who follow different faiths. There is a reward system whereby pupils earn house points, sometimes for good behaviour or effort. These are totalled and the current winners announced at the 'gold book' assemblies. Pupils are taught to respect property and equipment, and help to clear up after practical sessions in their classrooms. All staff are good role models for pupils, and relationships have been established very well so that there is a caring, respectful but happy atmosphere in all lessons.

37. There is very good provision for pupils' social development and they learn how to get on with others through a variety of clubs and after school activities. For example, they can join the choir, play football or netball, help the environment by working in the 'green squad', or attend one of the recorder groups. A very good example of a social, family occasion, is the 'gold book' assembly, so called because there is a gold book in which successes are recorded. At this assembly, several pupils from each class bring out certificates and good work and their successes are celebrated by all. In the assembly observed during the inspection, some twenty pupils were called out to receive congratulations. At other times, pupils join in with local events such as harvest, and the summer fair. A very good initiative, which promotes social development very effectively, is when Year 6 pupils write stories and illustrate them and then go and read them to Year 1 pupils. In every class there is a warm friendly atmosphere and pupils clearly enjoy being at school and are learning well. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into this happy and caring school. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to work together in small groups, sharing apparatus and equipment sensibly and fairly. Some pupils have jobs and responsibilities in the classroom such as tidying, giving out equipment, and taking the register to the office. In some lessons there are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own work. For example, in science, pupils often make suggestions about how they can devise an experiment and record it, such as the seed growing work in Year 3.

38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good, and is promoted through subjects such as religious education, art, music and history. Some pupils produce art work in the style of famous artists such as Matisse or van Gogh. They are made aware of a range of cultures in work such as that about Mexico or the West Indies. They are encouraged to listen to music, and in all assemblies the title and composer are written up for pupils to see. For the week of the inspection, it was music by Ravel. Pupils have the opportunity to visit places of interest such as the Hornimans Museum or the Florence Nightingale museum. Storytellers, a poet, and theatrical groups visit the school, and pupils have the chance to sing and play music in festivals and in the school assemblies. The school has held 'book

weeks', and Year 5 pupils have written sonnets after the Shakespearean style. In religious education, some pupils have experienced food and clothing from other cultures and they learn about ceremonies and festivals. They have studied the Chinese New Year, made masks and experienced Chinese food. There is, however, insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school places high priority on providing a safe and happy environment, and it cares for its pupils very well. Twice each term, a committee consisting of the headteacher and governors inspects for health and safety. This committee includes a governor who is a health and safety professional. At each meeting, it lists items needing attention. At the next meeting, it checks the action taken. The caretaker has a wide range of skills, and corrects a high proportion of the defects himself. He has achieved substantial improvements in a relatively short time. The school has very good procedures for child protection. It follows the local authority policy and works closely with appropriate agencies. The headteacher is the designated teacher. He has received full training that includes a recent up-dating course and ensures that staff are aware of the requirements. A member of staff with a current certificate co-ordinates the very good arrangements for first aid and several other members of staff have undertaken specialised training in first aid for children.

40. Monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is good, and the school provides good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. It is strong in supporting pupils' personal initiatives. The school has very good procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development. The headteacher routinely observes attitudes and behaviour in his monitoring of lessons. Teachers know pupils and their families very well. They have established very good relationships with their classes. The school sets personal targets for all pupils, and discusses these at meetings with parents and pupils.

41. The school provides very good personal support for pupils, who respect the behaviour policy and know it well. They respond keenly to the rewards system and are eager to win stickers, team points and certificates for good behaviour. Throughout the school, teachers use 'catch me' cards to congratulate pupils for being good. Year 6 pupils compete keenly for a special award for exceptional effort. Pupils are very well aware of the system of red and yellow cards as sanctions against poor behaviour. Parents who remember their own time at the school have suggested another sanction. In their day, the school had a 'naughty bench' where they had to stand when they deserved to. The 'naughty bench' has been reinstated, but the school rarely needs to use it. There are very good procedures to deter bullying. As a first step, the school sets up a 'First Stop' meeting. The pupils tell an independent third party how they feel about one another. A pupil interviewed said she feels this works very well, and there is no longer a problem.

42. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs are good. Targets, which are included in individual education plans, are appropriate and measurable. Where necessary, outside help is used appropriately for more advice. There are reviews of pupils' individual targets every term. Pupils with special educational needs have equal opportunities for inclusion in all school activities, and are fully integrated into the life of the school.

43. The school has good procedures to promote attendance. The educational welfare officer comes to school frequently, and gives effective support if a family is having difficulties. Teachers maintain the registers meticulously. The school secretary reminds families of the need to send a note if the child is away. She keeps a very useful check on individual patterns of attendance. The school

policy of setting 'early work' during registration encourages pupils to arrive in good time and make a brisk start each morning.

44. There are good procedures for checking the attainment and progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. In English and mathematics, the teachers have begun to sample some pupils' work and agree on what National curriculum levels of attainment they illustrate. This is helping to improve the accuracy and consistency of their assessments, particularly in focusing on achievement at the higher levels of the National Curriculum. The school has a clear assessment policy document, which outlines the timetable for assessments throughout the year. In other subjects, the teachers check the pupils' progress in their own way. There are no formal, whole school procedures in place for doing this, so the teachers are unaware of how colleagues are measuring attainment in these subjects. In some subjects, such as design and technology, the pupils are encouraged to evaluate and assess their own progress. Samples of work for each pupil are passed on to the next teacher.

45. Information from assessment of the children soon after they enter the school, and from subsequent assessments in other years, including national test results, is now being soundly used to plan future work and to set individual targets for improvement in English and mathematics. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. In Year 6, the pupils have a regular 'clinic', where teaching focuses on problems in learning encountered during the week. The headteacher has also carefully analysed national test results by gender and this has led, for example, to the development of strategies to improve boys' achievement in reading and writing in Key Stage 1.

46. There is a clear marking policy, which emphasises the need for the marking of pupils' work to be supportive and to offer suggestions for improvement. There are good examples of this in practice, such as "A side view would be helpful; make it clear what your measurements refer to" (Year 6 design and technology). However, marking of this quality is not consistent and this reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Too much marking in many subjects offers little guidance on improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Parents have a very good opinion of the school. They particularly value the good teaching and the high standards that their children achieve by the end of their time at school. In answer to the inspection questionnaires, nine out of ten parents gave positive responses to nine out of the 12 questions. A minority expressed concern on three issues: the amount of homework, information on pupils' progress, and the range of extracurricular activities. The findings of the inspection are that the school provides a good range of extracurricular activities and good information on pupils' progress. Homework is used appropriately to support pupils' learning.

48. The school has very good links with parents. Parents have the opportunity to meet with their child's class teacher each term. In October, parents and teachers establish the child's targets, which are then reviewed and modified in the spring as appropriate. In the summer, parents come in to see their child's work and discuss progress through the year. Class teachers and the headteacher are available for informal and formal consultations at any time. In many instances, parents have a quick word with the teacher at the end of the day. The school has recently held parents' workshops on literacy, numeracy and the Foundation Stage. The school has an active friends' association. Parents, staff and local people strongly support the events, and together, they raise funds effectively for extra facilities to extend pupils' learning.

49. The school provides very good information for parents. It issues an updated prospectus each year, telling parents what is happening in the school improvement plan. It sends newsletters regularly.

The school provides new parents with good information before their children start school. Teachers visit prospective new entrants at home before they start in the Reception class and welcome them into school to help them feel at ease and to familiarise themselves with the surroundings. The school circulated its own parental questionnaire, before it knew of the OFSTED inspection. This gave valuable ideas about where communication with parents could improve, especially in the matter of homework. The annual reports to parents about their children have a space that encourages teachers to set targets in English, mathematics and science. Teachers are doing this, and giving a detailed account of what the pupils know and can do. The reports are of high quality.

50. Parents contribute well to their children's learning. Their involvement in the work of the school has a positive impact. About three parent volunteers help every week in each class. Parents help very extensively with visits. For example, when pupils do local studies in history or geography, up to six parents may accompany a single class to ensure safety from the heavy traffic. Parents support the home-school agreement, and many parents take an active part in their children's homework. Parents of the younger children read at home with them frequently. The school has a particular strength in getting parents to support project work that goes beyond pupils' usual studies. This ranges from self-chosen challenges in mathematics and science to a co-operative study by a group of pupils on how the village has changed with the passing of time.

51. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed well about the support given at school, and their views are sought. They are well aware of their child's targets for improvement and discuss these with teachers at parents' evenings. There are frequent contacts at other times, and teachers keep useful records of their communications with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The school's leadership and management are good, and there have been many significant improvements since the previous inspection. No clear judgement was made in the previous inspection report, though the headteacher's leadership was described as "purposeful". A number of weaknesses were identified, including development planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures and insufficient delegation of responsibilities. At the time of this inspection, the headteacher had been in post for only one term. The previous headteacher left the school in July 2000 and a temporary headteacher led the school during the autumn term 2000. The present headteacher provides very clear direction for the school. He has quickly got to grips with the main issues that are facing the school and has already put effective systems and strategies in place to improve monitoring procedures. He has begun to review the role and effectiveness of the deputy headteacher, who had been absent for half a term at the time of this inspection. The headteacher acknowledges that the deputy has too many responsibilities, and is considering ways to address this. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had too many curricular responsibilities and the report recommended greater delegation. This has been achieved, and subject responsibilities are generally delegated appropriately. Co-ordinators have a clear understanding of their role, though some are new to it, and all are involved in identifying and planning for future developments in their subjects. There is a strong team spirit amongst the staff, that ensures the school's aims and values are implemented well and there is a clear focus on improvement and raising standards. Staff are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all pupils, and this commitment underpins every aspect of school life. There is a good shared commitment to improvement and the school has a good capacity to succeed.

53. The school has made a good improvement since it was last inspected in February 1997. In the 1997 national tests for 11 year olds, standards were well below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. In the tests in 2000, the results were above average in all three subjects. The school has been particularly successful in raising the attainment of more able

pupils. The findings of the inspection show that these high standards are being maintained. The quality of teaching has also improved since 1997. At that time, only 84 per cent of the teaching seen was satisfactory, and "over half" was good. In this inspection, 98 per cent of the lessons observed were at least satisfactory, and 82 per cent were good. In 1997, the strongest teaching was seen in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. The situation has now reversed, and the strongest teaching is in Key Stage 2. The most notable improvement is in teachers' expectations at Key Stage 2, which are now much higher than they were four years ago, and this is reflected in the standards pupils achieve.

54. The key issues for action from the school's last inspection have been dealt with effectively. The school improvement plan now covers three years and staff and governors are fully involved in identifying priorities and evaluating the success of the actions undertaken. It is clearly linked to the school's budget planning process and shows how the success of different initiatives can be measured. The management of the curriculum has been improved by greater delegation of responsibilities and by clarifying and strengthening the role of subject and key stage co-ordinators. There has been effective monitoring of teaching by the new headteacher and the literacy co-ordinator, and detailed analysis of the pupils' performance in national and internal tests, which has identified priorities for improvement, such as boys' reading and writing. Curricular planning has developed well as new schemes of work have been introduced and evaluated. Clearer assessment procedures help teachers to plan work to meet the needs of individual pupils more closely. The statutory requirements for teaching physical education at Key Stage 2 are now being met, but those for teaching information and communication technology are not, as the school is not fully equipped to cover all aspects of the subject. However, the headteacher has taken over responsibility for this subject and has already ordered new equipment to ensure that requirements will be met by the beginning of the next school year.

55. The governors use their individual skills and expertise well to support the school. They visit the school whenever possible and each governor is attached to a class. Governors receive reports from the headteacher and co-ordinators, which keep them well informed about how the school is performing. The governors with responsibility for literacy and numeracy have met with the co-ordinators for those subjects to discuss the outcomes of monitoring activities. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strong points and where improvement is required. For example, they are aware of some of the shortcomings of the accommodation and have allocated funds to improve classrooms. The chair of governors meets regularly with the headteacher to keep abreast of developments, and information is passed on at meetings of the governing body and sub-committees. Governors analyse and discuss the school's performance in national tests and how this can be improved. The headteacher is working closely with governors to improve the rigour with which they monitor what is happening in the school. Governors fulfil most of their statutory obligations; however, the statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not being met, and there is no information about the school's provision for special educational needs in the governors' Annual Report to parents.

56. Overall, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are good and effective procedures are in place. The headteacher, governors and senior management team analyse the results of national and internal tests in order to identify those areas in need of improvement. So far this has been effective in addressing boys' achievements in reading at Key Stage 1, standards in writing throughout the school, and provision for information and communication technology, which is the school's main priority for the current year. It has not addressed standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1. The headteacher has carried out observations on every teacher and has clearly identified the strengths of teaching throughout the school and where improvement is needed. The literacy co-ordinator provides a very good model for monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning, which the headteacher intends to duplicate in other subjects. Her written feedback to staff and analysis of her findings is succinct and clearly shows what needs to be

done to raise standards further. The school also has the beginnings of an effective system of tracking pupils' progress from the Reception year, and setting targets for them to achieve in national tests, although this is currently only in place at Key Stage 1.

57. The financial resources that are allocated to the school are used well to provide a good quality of education for the pupils. Financial planning is good and is linked closely to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Budget monitoring procedures are efficient and the headteacher, staff and governors are all alert to the need to obtain good value for money. At the time of the previous inspection, the school had a budget deficit of around £12,000. This came about as a result of the creation of a seventh class, and was carefully managed by the governors so that it was eventually eradicated as a result of stringent cutbacks in some areas. The school is now in a much healthier financial condition. However, at the end of the last financial year in 2000, there was a budget surplus of approximately £30,000, representing over eight per cent of the school's income. When the present headteacher was appointed, he found that this surplus had increased, as governors were unwilling to make spending decisions until a permanent headteacher was in post. A significant proportion of the surplus is being held in order to fund the installation of a computer suite, which is due to be completed by the end of the summer term 2001. The headteacher has already identified, and agreed with governors, how much of the surplus money is to be spent to improve the teaching environment, and resources, and appropriate plans are in place to reduce this figure to within more acceptable limits. The school's administrative officer is very experienced and efficient and keeps the headteacher, staff and governors well informed about the overall budget and individual subject budgets from month to month.

58. The co-ordinator for special educational needs organises the provision, care and support for these pupils well. Pupils receive good support from learning assistants, and the teachers provide suitable targets and work for them, so that they make good progress and can join in all that the classes do.

59. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified teachers, whose skills meet the requirements of the National Curriculum well. The school has organised its staff effectively on the whole to cope with the absence of a senior member of staff through illness, using supply teachers to support a recently qualified teacher in Year 2 with a large class. The school has provided a good range of training opportunities to develop teachers' skills, and these have particularly helped the effective implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. New teachers to the school have the good support of comprehensive induction procedures, and they appreciate the valuable guidance of mentors. A good supply of classroom assistants are well trained and knowledgeable and provide good support to pupils, especially those with special educational needs. The specialist skills of some staff are used well, and have a particularly good impact on the teaching and learning of music.

60. The school's accommodation is spacious, and satisfactorily meets the demands of the National Curriculum. The headteacher and governors have allocated funds to carry out a number of improvements to the classrooms, some of which have old and outdated fittings. The only notable weakness is the library, which is too small to give pupils a place where they can easily browse and enjoy books. The caretaker works hard to keep the school and grounds clean and well maintained. Attractive displays of pupils' work help to create a stimulating and colourful learning environment.

61. The supply of learning resources is satisfactory overall. These are good in science and music, and help pupils attain above average standards by Year 6. In information and communication technology, there is a satisfactory supply of modern computers, but the school lacks important equipment and software in the juniors to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to improve the quality of education provided by the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. Improve the standards achieved by pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 1 by:

- planning more challenging work for the more able pupils
- making more use of mathematics in other areas of the curriculum;

(Paragraphs 2-4, 20, 24, 89, 91, 92, 94)

2. Ensure that the statutory curriculum is in place and raise standards in information and communication technology at Key Stage 2 by:*

- ensuring that all elements of the curriculum are taught;
- providing sufficient resources to teach all aspects effectively.

(Paragraphs 9, 26, 55, 123-124)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

1. Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work at Key Stage 1.

(Paragraphs 4, 81)

2. Continue to develop assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

(Paragraphs 44, 108, 112, 116, 124, 136)

3. Ensure that the marking of pupils' work is consistently good and shows them clearly how to improve.

(Paragraphs 23, 46, 88, 97)

3. Ensure that the governors' Annual Report to parents meets statutory requirements.

(Paragraph 55)

*denotes issues that are identified in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	16	63	16	2	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)	203
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	17	13	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	13
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	27	27	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (77)	90 (77)	87 (80)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	14
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	27	25	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (73)	83 (73)	90 (80)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	17	13	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	11	9	13
	Total	25	23	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (65)	77 (76)	93 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	13	14
	Girls	8	10	9
	Total	18	23	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (74)	77 (76)	77 (76)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	173
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130

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	2	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.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	361844
Total expenditure	347009
Expenditure per pupil	1744
Balance brought forward from previous year	15187
Balance carried forward to next year	30022

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	203
Number of questionnaires returned	89

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	56	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	57	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	16	2	1
The teaching is good.	40	54	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	40	21	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	52	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	47	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	67	7	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	27	57	0	0	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	56	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	31	28	10	21

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

63. Children are admitted to the Reception class at the beginning of the autumn term. Their attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. At the time of the inspection, all of the children were attending school full-time. The class teacher is in her first year of teaching and had not received training in the Foundation Stage. However, she has received very good support from an external adviser, and has made good progress in implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum, particularly during the spring term 2001. The children have made satisfactory progress, overall, and are on course to reach the standards expected of children by the end of the Reception year in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. In personal, social and emotional development, children have made good progress and many have already achieved the goals set nationally for children to achieve in this area of learning. The previous inspection found that children in the Reception year made very good progress in their learning and reached standards that were "often higher than national expectations". A significant minority of the children in the current Reception class are on course to achieve higher than average standards by the end of the year.

64. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good, overall. The evidence of children's work, the teacher's planning, monitoring reports by a visiting adviser and discussions with the teacher and headteacher show that the quality of teaching and learning has improved throughout the year, as the teacher has become more familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum and the needs and capabilities of the children. As a result, children were observed to make good progress in four of the six lessons seen, and satisfactory progress in the other two. A strength of the teaching is the good teamwork between the class teacher and the nursery nurse, who plan and organise the curriculum and the classroom together, as well as carrying out frequent observations of the children and recording their attainment and progress in all areas of learning each week.

Personal, social and emotional development

65. The children have made good progress in their personal and social development since starting school, as a result of good teaching. This area of learning is given a high priority and has a positive impact on learning. The children are interested and motivated to learn, because the teacher is enthusiastic and makes learning fun for them. As a result, they are confident to try new activities and answer questions or suggest ideas. Children generally concentrate very well on what they are doing and sit quietly when the teacher is speaking to them. They form good relationships with each other and with adults, and their behaviour is very good.

66. The teacher and assistant have created a calm, secure learning environment, in which children are valued as individuals. They ensure that the learning environment enables children to be independent in using resources and that it provides opportunities for them to make choices and select activities. Both adults encourage children to be courteous and provide activities that involve taking turns and sharing. In one lesson, a group of children worked with the assistant to make salt dough. They took turns to add water to the flour and salt mixture, to stir it and to explain how it felt and how it was changing.

Communication, language and literacy

67. Earlier in the year, children's work shows that they made satisfactory progress in this area of learning. The lessons seen during the inspection show that they are now making good progress. They enjoy listening to stories, songs and rhymes, and are able to retell the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* with the events in the correct sequence. When playing, they interact with others and take turns in conversation. Most children speak confidently and audibly and express their ideas and feelings clearly. Children who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language are making good progress in speaking and understanding what others are saying. They can communicate basic needs and participate in most activities in the classroom. Children hear and say the initial and final sounds in some words and know which letters are linked to the sounds. They hear and recognise words that rhyme. More able children use their growing knowledge of sounds to write simple, regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words. They also read correctly a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences. Children attempt writing for different purposes. For example, they write a shopping list, sequence a story in words and pictures, and write a 'sorry letter' from Goldilocks to the three bears. Children show a sound understanding of the key elements of a story, such as the main characters and sequence of events.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The teacher and assistant provide opportunities for children to engage in story making through role-play, and foster their enjoyment of spoken and written language through whole class and group shared reading and writing sessions. In a very good lesson, the teacher's expressive modelling of reading clearly influenced the way children read aloud together, with expression and enjoyment, from a large text. Both adults engage children in conversation throughout the day, asking them to explain what they have observed or what they are doing. For example, in one lesson, the teacher worked with a small group of children, helping them to write a letter and encouraging them to hear the sounds in the words they were trying to write.

Mathematical development

69. Children make satisfactory progress in their mathematical development. They count up to ten objects accurately and recognise numerals up to nine. More able children count up to 20 and some beyond. Children recognise and name circles, triangles and squares. In one lesson, children threw bean bags at targets and recorded their scores with tally marks. With help, they tried to add two scores together, but many found this too difficult. Some children added up the number of spots on two different cards. Children make repeating patterns using shapes and colours, and use correct mathematical vocabulary, such as 'bigger' and 'smaller' when comparing the size of objects. They use everyday words such as 'under' and 'behind' to describe the position of an object.

70. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The teacher ensures that children have plenty of opportunities for counting as part of everyday classroom routines. She uses familiar rhymes and songs to reinforce the children's understanding of number, and ensures that they have opportunities to use practical apparatus to enhance their learning. In one lesson, the teacher made good use of large number cards to reinforce the children's understanding of how to place the digits 1 to 12 in the right order. Through careful questioning, she enabled them to understand the concept of 'one more', 'lowest' and 'highest'. In the whole class session, and in the group activities that were supported by the teacher and assistant, the children benefited from very good questioning and clear explanations that helped them to begin to understand the concept of 'doubles'. However, the children who chose freely from a wide range of mathematical games and toys did not gain much from their activity when unsupported, as they did not understand the purpose of some of the games.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Children make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world, which prepares them appropriately for the National Curriculum in Year 1 in history, geography, design and technology and information and communication technology. They find out about past and present events in their own lives and those of their families and compare new and old toys. They make playdough by combining flour, salt, water and food colouring and observe how the ingredients change when they are mixed together. Children investigate how seeds grow into plants and learn how caterpillars change into butterflies. They choose suitable materials to make clothes for a teddy and enjoy investigating how toys work. In one lesson, some children sorted toys into groups, according to their type. Others experimented with toy cars and a ramp to compare how far they travelled and whether the height of the ramp made any difference. Pupils have drawn pictures of themselves on the computer, which demonstrate good control of the mouse. They learn how to program a toy robot by pressing buttons to make it move forwards or change direction. Children build and construct using a wide range of equipment, and use glue, staples and sticky tape to join materials together.

72. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good and the teacher's planning for this area of learning is satisfactory. However, the planning for play activities, such as sand and water, and the use of the outside area, does not always show clearly what children are expected to learn. The teacher and assistant provide a variety of appropriate opportunities for children to investigate the world around them using their senses. For instance, they took the children on an 'autumn walk' and visited an allotment to find out about plants. They encourage children to be observant and to comment on differences and similarities in what they see. When children tested how far different toy vehicles travelled, the teacher asked them which went furthest and why they thought this was. Both adults provide opportunities for children to learn different cutting and joining techniques, and to select the materials they are using. Voluntary helpers are not always well enough prepared to support children effectively in their learning.

Physical development

73. Children make satisfactory progress in their physical development. They move with increasing control and co-ordination and show awareness of space as they walk around the hall balancing bean bags on their heads. They slide bean bags and roll large balls along the floor to each other, but are unable to throw bean bags into hoops with any degree of accuracy. Children handle scissors, construction equipment and playdough with appropriate skill and control for their age. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Although photographic evidence shows that children play on tricycles and in the playhouses in the enclosed outside area, the teacher's planning indicates that the potential for developing physical skills in this area is not fully exploited. The teacher provides opportunities for pupils to learn what happens to their bodies when they engage in vigorous exercise. She ensures that children use a range of large and small equipment in order to develop and practise a variety of skills safely.

Creative development

74. Children make satisfactory progress in their creative development. They print pictures and patterns using an assortment of different objects. In the autumn term, they created fireworks pictures by splattering paint and using straws to blow it along the paper. Children draw fruit and vegetables using oil pastels and make masks. They use percussion instruments to make sound effects for *We're going on a bear hunt*, and enjoy singing songs. They have made patchwork collages of Elmer the elephant, using squares of tissue and crepe paper. Children enjoy acting out the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and perform puppet shows in the 'Reception Theatre'. The teacher is successful in expanding the children's imagination through stories, music, pictures and painting. She provides opportunities for children to create imaginary situations through role play, and involves them in

deciding what the theme of the role play corner is to be each term. This has been a shop, a home corner and a theatre, and is equipped with appropriate resources to stimulate imaginative play. Painting, printing, collage and model making activities are carefully planned to develop the children's ability to express their ideas using a range of media and resources.

ENGLISH

75. Overall, standards in English are in line with the national average for seven year olds and above average for 11 year olds. This represents a decline in standards for seven year olds since the previous inspection, when they were judged to be above average, and an improvement for 11 year olds, whose standards were then average. However, although the inspection findings in 1997 showed standards in English to be above average at Key Stage 1, those in writing were described as "variable", and the results of the national tests in writing were below average later that same year. The findings of this inspection agree with the results of the 2000 national tests at Key Stage 1. Over the past four years, standards in reading at Key Stage 1 have fallen, largely due to underachievement by boys. The school has identified this as a priority in its improvement plan, and is implementing different strategies to address it. As a result, standards in reading are average for the current Year 2, and boys' standards are improving. Standards in writing remained low until 2000, when they reached the national average. They are currently on course to meet the national average for the current Year 2. At Key Stage 2, the previous inspection found standards to be in line with the national average. However, the results of the national tests in 1997 were well below average. Since then, there has been a significant improvement in the standards achieved overall, in both reading and writing. When compared with schools that have a similar percentage of free school meals, the school's results in 2000 were below average in reading and average in writing at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, they were above average. Comparisons with schools that had similar Key Stage 1 results in 1997 are unreliable, as approximately a quarter of the pupils in the current Year 6 have joined the school since that time. The school comfortably exceeded its target for the percentage of pupils expected to reach Level 4 and above in the national tests in 2000, and a high proportion of pupils reached Level 5. Appropriately challenging targets have been set for the pupils currently in Years 2 and 6. Consistent with the national picture, standards in writing continue to lag behind those in reading throughout the school. However, the school has already identified improving writing skills as a main priority in its improvement plan, and strategies that have already been put in place are beginning to have a positive effect.

76. Pupils achieve soundly in English at Key Stage 1. As they move through Key Stage 2, progress accelerates and they achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school achieve good standards compared with their previous attainment, because they receive well-targeted support in class and are also sometimes withdrawn from the classroom to work in a small group with a learning support assistant. The Additional Literacy Programme in Years 3 and 4 meets their needs well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve well.

77. At Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are average. They are above average at Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy listening to stories, rhymes and poems and discussing them. This was evident when Year 1 pupils enjoyed reading and discussing a poem about a polar bear during the first part of the literacy hour. In Year 2, pupils listened attentively to the teacher's questions about *Jim and the Beanstalk* by Raymond Briggs. Most spoke confidently and audibly when answering the teacher's questions and were not afraid to offer their ideas and opinions about the story.

78. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to be active and responsive listeners. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils listened very carefully to the teacher's explanation of how to convert the story of *The Very*

Hungry Caterpillar into a diary account, written from the caterpillar's point of view. As a result, they knew exactly what was expected of them and got on quickly with the task. In a Year 5 drama lesson, pupils presented their opinions about a moral dilemma articulately and spoke very confidently in front of the class. Others listened attentively to their point of view and responded with appropriate questions. In a Year 6 drugs education lesson, pupils participated with enthusiasm in a discussion about the dangers associated with taking certain drugs.

79. Standards in reading are average at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and participate with great enthusiasm when reading the shared text in the literacy hour. Most, even the youngest, do this with clear and expressive voices. At Key Stage 1, average pupils read simple texts accurately and with understanding. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds to work out unfamiliar words, although some need prompting to do this. More able pupils read confidently and with good expression and readily tackle more demanding texts. In a Year 2 lesson, less able pupils read aloud in a group with confidence and a good degree of accuracy. They were reading appropriately challenging texts, and both girls and boys were making good progress.

80. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop an interest in and enthusiasm for books. By Year 6, they read with fluency and accuracy and express clear opinions about their favourite books. During the inspection, pupils used skimming and scanning techniques to find information from different texts. They also demonstrated sound proof-reading skills when identifying words that were spelt incorrectly in a piece of text. In a history lesson, pupils in Year 5 made good use of information books and computer programs to find out about life since the Second World War.

81. Standards in writing are average at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2. Average pupils in Year 2 have a growing awareness of how to structure a story and use an appropriate range of vocabulary to hold the reader's interest. They are beginning to use capital letters and full stops correctly to demarcate sentences. A few able pupils have progressed well throughout the year and are now writing lengthy, well organised, and often imaginative, stories and descriptions, sometimes using paragraphs and speech marks correctly. The basic grammatical structure of sentences is usually accurate, and pupils make plausible attempts at spelling some complex words. There are two main areas for improvement. Although the school's policy for handwriting states that joined handwriting is taught from the end of Year 1, this is not done consistently, with the result that standards in handwriting and presentation are below average by the age of seven. A careful analysis of the pupils' work in all subjects shows that pupils in Year 2 do not have enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. The school has recently introduced a 'writing workshop' session once a week for Year 2 pupils to develop their skills in writing extended pieces of work, which is a good initiative.

82. In Year 6, pupils write in an interesting and challenging variety of forms. These include imaginative writing in the first person, factual writing about the ancient Olympic Games, a Maidstone Town Guide, play scripts, poems, book reviews and instructional texts. Pupils produced a "Hover Bike Owner's Handbook" to a very high standard and wrote book reviews which showed a good understanding of evaluative text. The best writing shows a good command of style and expression. For example, when studying persuasive writing, pupils compiled leaflets entitled "Welcome to Sea World", in which they used language imaginatively and adventurously, in order to persuade people to visit the attraction... "Here you can discover the imaginary underwater world of tropical creatures"... and the more gruesome "visit the spine chilling, heart thrilling, body spilling Shark Video Centre". It was clear from reading these pieces of work that pupils had put a great deal of thought into their creation and had obviously enjoyed writing them. They took a pride in their finished work, which was presented beautifully, much having been word-processed and enlivened with illustrations. The writing of some below average pupils is still immature in style and content and contains many spelling and

punctuation errors. Above average pupils, including both boys and girls, have produced work of a very high standard, which engages and sustains the reader's interest and attention.

83. Pupils have completed a very good amount of work in two terms during the literacy hour, and show a good understanding of grammatical conventions. Work on prefixes, tenses, passive verbs, clauses and connecting words is of a good standard, though it is only reflected in the writing of the more able pupils. In a spelling test for Year 6 pupils, many were able to spell correctly complex words such as 'disappeared', 'gradually' and 'excited', although pupils' work reveals that they often forget how to spell words correctly when writing freely.

84. Standards in literacy are average at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2. The development of literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, where there are many opportunities for pupils to develop research and writing skills in history, geography, religious education and design and technology. At Key Stage 1, there is an over dependence on worksheets which require predictable and sometimes one word answers. This leaves little scope for extending pupils' range of experience in writing and often does not present sufficient challenge.

85. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1. In the previous inspection it was found to be "good and often very good". At the time of the inspection, the Year 2 teacher, who is also the English co-ordinator, was covering another teacher's absence in a Key Stage 2 class. The Year 2 class was being taught by two temporary teachers. In the two lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was good, but when the whole range of pupils' learning over the year is taken into account, it is satisfactory. This is partly due to the sudden and unexpected change of teachers, which has, to some extent, affected the continuity of learning for these pupils. In Years 1 and 2, there is a good focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, and teachers pitch questions carefully to draw out pupils' responses. Reading skills are developed well through sharing texts as a whole class and by providing appropriate books for pupils to read in groups, guided by a teacher or assistant. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to read expressively "in a giant's voice", which helped them to get inside the character and create an appropriate atmosphere. She asked pupils to predict what might happen next in the story... "What do you think the giant will say about his false teeth?"..., which encouraged pupils to think imaginatively. However, in the pupils' work that has been completed over two terms, there are not enough examples of pupils being given the opportunity to write at length in order to develop the style and content of their writing. There is insufficient teaching of a neat joined handwriting style.

86. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 is consistently good, and often very good. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when the quality of teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to good. At that time, weaknesses included low expectations of pupils and inappropriate tasks being set that did not match the pupils' ability. Of the six lessons seen during the inspection, three were good and three were very good. A key feature of this good teaching is the consistently high expectations that teachers have of their pupils and the suitably high level of challenge in the work that is provided for pupils of all abilities. This ensures that pupils are encouraged to strive for high standards and are given work that matches their needs. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy, which they are implementing very well. They also recognise the need to give pupils additional opportunities for writing at length, and provide a good range of experiences for pupils to draft, edit and revise their work and to produce writing in different forms. There is very good teaching of basic skills, and very good management of pupils, which ensures that all concentrate well and apply considerable creative effort to their work.

87. The best features of the teaching and learning were seen in the three very good lessons. In Year 4, in a very well planned and structured lesson about persuasive writing, which built effectively on pupils' previous learning, the teacher made very effective use of a newspaper article to focus pupils' attention on how people expressed different points of view about school uniform. Through well-targeted questions, she helped pupils to find information from the text and to compare the ideas presented. By focusing on the words that were used to connect arguments, or to introduce contrary opinions, such as 'furthermore', 'however', 'besides' and 'on the other hand', she enabled pupils to deepen their understanding of how to present and structure an argument. A very good drama lesson in Year 5 showed how well pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed at this key stage. The teacher's lively and enthusiastic presentation of a "delicious dilemma" for the pupils to discuss, and her infectious enthusiasm and talent for drama motivated the pupils to participate with confidence, and to present convincing reasons to back up their point of view. The lesson also made a very good contribution to pupils' moral development as they considered the rights and wrongs of helping oneself to money from a purse found on the kitchen table! Pupils in Year 6 made very good progress in creating a story as a result of a very well structured lesson, taught by the headteacher, which was highly effective in encouraging pupils to think creatively and imaginatively. Pupils gained inspiration from a range of exciting 'artefacts', including a skate that was once owned by Torvill and Dean and a broken hydraulic pipe that was said to have caused the speedboat *Bluebird* to crash. These were presented with great enthusiasm and plausibility, which prompted pupils to equally convincing flights of fancy. For example, one pupil based his story around a pipe from the *Titanic*. Pupils benefited greatly from the teacher's high expectations of what they could achieve and his careful modelling of how to use believable facts within a work of fiction and how to use paragraphs to create a change of mood or time.

88. The curriculum in English is varied and interesting and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are good and the information gained from assessment is used well to identify priorities for improvement. For example, boys' reading at Key Stage 1 and the quality of writing throughout the school have both been earmarked for improvement. In response to these issues, the school purchased books that appeal specifically to boys, to encourage them to enjoy reading, and invited a number of male parents and visitors to act as role models in reading stories during 'Book Week'. Teachers try to ensure that equal numbers of boys and girls are given opportunities to answer questions in class. Writing workshops have been introduced in Years 2 and 5 by the co-ordinator, who is monitoring and evaluating the success of this strategy. Pupils have individual targets for improvement, such as "improve my handwriting and general presentation". Information and communication technology is used well to support teaching and learning in English. The quality of teachers' marking is variable throughout the school. In Year 6, it is very detailed and constructive and shows pupils clearly what they must do to improve their work. Some marking is merely congratulatory, and some overstates how good the work actually is. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and experienced and is fully aware of the areas that need improvement and how to address them. She examines colleagues' planning and pupils' work, and has monitored the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a satisfactory range of resources and the library and classrooms have an appropriate range of books. However, in some classes, these are not displayed prominently or attractively to stimulate pupils' interest and enjoyment in reading. The subject is enhanced by events such as 'Book Week' and visits by theatre groups. Pupils' work is celebrated through colourful and well-presented displays. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as pupils are given numerous opportunities to respond to, and appreciate, a wide range of literature and to participate in drama and role play activities.

MATHEMATICS

89. Pupils in Year 2 attain below average standards in numeracy and all other areas of the mathematics curriculum. This finding shows a decline in standards since the previous inspection, when the very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 was pushing standards upwards. The results of the national tests for seven year olds in 2000 also showed that, compared with all schools and similar schools, standards were below average. The test results for pupils in 2000 were, nevertheless, an improvement on earlier years when the school's results were well below average. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress at this key stage, but more able pupils too rarely achieve the standards of which they are capable. In the 2000 national tests for 11 year olds, standards were above the national average, and above the average of pupils from similar schools. The inspection confirms these findings, and the significant improvement compared with the previous inspection. Standards are rising for 11 year-olds year by year, in line with the rate of improvement found nationally. Boys and girls attain equally well. The school has continued to set challenging targets and pupils are well on course to achieve them this year.

90. Pupils' progress, including that for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language, is good in the juniors. More able pupils do particularly well, and many achieve high standards in the national assessment tests.

91. Pupils enter the school with below average mathematical skills, and although most attain average levels by the end of Year 2, few move on to exceed them. This is because they are given too few opportunities in teachers' planning to develop the deeper understanding of mathematics needed to achieve higher levels. The lessons observed, and the scrutiny of pupils' work, show that pupils with average and below average attainment are challenged well, and they develop a sound range of basic skills. More able pupils, however, often have the same work as others in the class, or, as happened in one lesson, are left too long without guidance and do too little work.

92. Year 2 pupils have an average mental recall of some of the addition and subtraction facts to ten and they order numbers correctly up to 100 and beyond. Overall, however, pupils' numeracy skills are below average. They round numbers up and down with reasonable skill, but many struggle when asked which way they have rounded. Few have a good feel for number, and they often make basic mistakes when counting. The teaching of shape, space and measure is good, and teachers provide many interesting tasks to develop pupils' skills. As a result, they solve simple money problems, use centimetres to measure length and tell the time well. The teaching of data handling is also good, and pupils attain above average standards when conducting surveys and producing neat block graphs of their results. Pupils' use of mathematics by Year 2 is below average. Many quickly become confused when asked to turn a sum around to check its accuracy, or interpret a problem when it is couched in unfamiliar language. This is because teachers make too little use of mathematics in other subjects, and miss valuable opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills through daily routines such as registration.

93. By the age of 11, pupils have made good progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in developing numeracy skills. They are confident working with large numbers, and add, subtract, multiply and divide accurately. Their work on probability is good for their ages, with most using words such as 'fair' and 'likely' appropriately in their work. Pupils' work on co-ordinates is a particular strength, and nearly all plot shapes in all four quadrants with good skills. As in Key Stage 1, the strong teaching of shape and space yields good results as pupils work confidently with perimeter, areas of triangles and the characteristics of three-dimensional shapes. Pupils have many opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other areas, as was observed in science, as they plotted changes in temperature, in history, when they measured an imaginary Viking ship in the playground, and in registration, when Year 5 pupils were asked how many pupils were having sandwiches if two were staying for school lunch. These activities help pupils to conduct good mathematical investigations that involve patterns of

numbers, money and ratio. Pupils handle data well, making accurate frequency graphs on their test results and producing excellent line graphs to show the relationship between time and distance on a bicycle ride.

94. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall, but is not as good as that reported in the last inspection. This partly explains pupils' lower attainment. Teachers' planning provides interesting activities, and the numeracy lessons focus appropriately on teaching basic skills and, in the best practice, giving pupils opportunities to develop these skills in practical activities. Too often, however, the scrutiny of pupils' work, and the lesson observed, show that pupils in Year 2 are not challenged enough. Much of the work relies on worksheets, which are not always challenging enough, particularly for the more able group, and they make slow progress as a result. The way the planning for these pupils holds back their progress is illustrated by the good challenge presented by work on the 24 hour clock in December, compared with the modest expectations four months later when they are asked to say where numbers should go on a number square. Unsurprisingly, they soon became bored with this task and got little out of the lesson. The expectations of pupils in Year 1 are high, and the teacher pushes pupils hard to achieve their best work. In one lesson, the teacher teased pupils by saying how incredibly hard the next sum would be; they rose to the challenge with great excitement, and worked feverishly to prove the teacher wrong.

95. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is good and promotes good progress, especially in pupils' numeracy skills. There has been a very good improvement in the quality of teaching at this key stage since the last inspection, particularly in terms of the expectations that teachers have of pupils. This has clearly contributed to a rise in standards, and helps to explain why pupils' achievement, whatever their abilities, is so much better. Teachers' mathematical knowledge and understanding are very good, and this gives pupils a firm grounding in the basic skills in the earlier classes, so that when they reach Years 5 and 6 they are sufficiently confident with number to tackle new challenges successfully. In Year 3, the good teaching of numeracy enables pupils to work confidently with the four rules of number, and use this knowledge to work out problems involving money. The high expectations of the teacher are evident in pupils' good skills when tessellating shapes and solving problems in algebra.

96. In Year 4, the teaching is equally demanding and has pupils displaying good data handling skills as they conduct surveys and produce tally charts. A particular strength in Year 4 is the teacher's very good use of time, filling every minute with good opportunities for pupils to learn and consolidate their skills. In one lesson, the teacher even used the time productively when pupils were packing away their equipment, asking them to solve a problem in their head at the same time. In Years 5 and 6, the pace of teaching is maintained, and pupils raise their standards from average in Year 4 to above average by Year 6. In Year 5, the teaching is especially good, and gives many opportunities for pupils to solve complex problems. This broadens their knowledge by enabling them to apply their learning to many different situations, and helping them to work out difficult sums in a variety of ways. In Year 6, the very good focus on mental mathematics gives pupils the confidence to attack new work easily without having to struggle with the basic skills. In this way, pupils were introduced to the idea of percentages of large numbers, and were soon finding 15 per cent of 15000 with little trouble.

97. Teachers use homework well to consolidate the work done in class. This work is marked promptly, but, as with some other marking, it does not always give sufficient guidance as to how pupils can improve their work.

98. A knowledgeable co-ordinator, who clearly understands what is required to maintain high standards, manages and monitors the subject well. The co-ordinator has done much to help teachers understand the workings of the National Numeracy Strategy, and has provided good training, so that all

teachers are comfortable with the three-part lesson. This has helped raise the quality of teaching and pupils' standards in the national tests. The school monitors pupils' standards in these tests well, and has picked out some weaknesses which teachers have been able to focus upon in lessons. The weaker attainment of boys in Key Stage 1 compared with that of girls, however, has not been picked up, and they continue to lag behind. The range and use of the assessment procedures are generally good, although there is no whole-school system of regular assessment to ensure consistency.

SCIENCE

99. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are average, and this is broadly the same as the results of the 2000 National Curriculum end of key stage assessments. However, these findings represent a fall in standards from the findings of the last inspection, where standards were above average. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress over time, although a few are not sufficiently challenged in order to attain higher standards. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress towards their own targets. No significant differences were noted in the attainment of boys and girls.

100. Pupils in Year 6 attain above average standards, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. The end of key stage National Curriculum tests were also above average in 2000. The emphasis has been on improving investigative work, and pupils are encouraged to have a hand in setting up their own experiments. The school has also adopted a clear, scientific method of writing up these experiments. When the results over time are analysed, they show that attainment has been consistently above average at Key Stage 2, with standards rising to keep ahead of the national trends. This inspection finds no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

101. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 1. Pupils enjoy science and are absorbed in carrying out experiments and recording their findings. For example, in Year 1, pupils took various materials, such as plastic, metal, or wood, and, closing their eyes, described the feel of each to a partner. They used appropriate terms such as 'soft', 'bendy' or 'sharp'. Pupils in Year 2 were also working on materials, which they sorted into categories. They used magnifying glasses, and drew what they saw, finding layers and levels in the close-up views of materials. Most science is carried out directly through experiments and pupils successfully record their findings. They understand human growth and note the developments that take place from a baby at five months old to a child at five years. They understand simple circuits and find out what is wrong if one does not work. Pupils use appropriate words such as 'meter', 'fuse' and 'socket'. They make predictions about their experiments, such as when growing mustard seeds, and they know that plants need water and light in order to grow. Pupils successfully sort materials into groups of plastic, wood, and metal. They have done a little work on drug awareness and the dangers of what may seem like sweets. Pupils record their findings simply but well, and they are learning to be systematic about this.

102. The above average attainment in Key Stage 2 is due to good teaching, which results in good learning and good progress for the great majority of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from excellent to good. Lessons are well planned, and make good use of a wide variety of resources. A good example of this was seen in Year 4, where pupils were working on circuits. Every group had a good supply of equipment and pupils were challenged well to conduct their own investigations. As an extra help towards understanding, the teacher had brought in a short length of giant cable used in electricity sub-stations. One pupil held this while the next held a piece used from the main cable to houses, and so on, getting smaller until they came to ordinary cable used in appliances round the home. Pupils record their findings in a systematic and scientific way, and include predictions, measurements and results. They always compare their

predictions with their findings, and this enhances their understanding of the investigation they have done. Year 3 pupils planned an experiment to find out how much water a seed needs to grow. They had a clear idea of what was needed and set up an experiment that would last over several weeks. Having made their predictions, they are awaiting results. A Year 5 lesson was a hive of activity as pupils 'performed' the action of the heart pumping blood round the body through both veins and arteries. In this excellent lesson, they learned through active participation, and because the learning was visual at first, they remembered it better than confining it to writing or reading activities only. By the end of the session, everyone had worked through at least three activities and added facts found on the computers about heart function, disease, and transplants. Year 6 pupils understand that gravity exists and that up thrust is a force exerted on objects by water. They know how light travels and can be deflected, and they understand such terms as 'opaque' and 'reflection'. In their work on electricity, pupils understand some of the issues about safety, and they use correct symbols in their diagrams. All Key Stage 2 experiments are well written about and follow a careful pattern, with pupils evaluating their own findings with help from the teachers.

103. Science follows the nationally recommended schemes of work, but since these were adopted only this school year, there has been little opportunity to evaluate them and adapt them to the school's needs. This has resulted in some repetition of topics, but this problem is to be evaluated when a full year of the scheme has been tried out. Effective leadership in science is provided by the headteacher, who monitors the subject as part of the school's monitoring of all teaching and learning. Resources are good and enable all pupils to have 'hands on' experience when they conduct experiments. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, with some decline in attainment at Key Stage 1, but good improvement at Key Stage 2. Good links with numeracy were evident throughout the inspection, and there are opportunities to use computers in some lessons, although this is not fully developed across all classes. All teachers pay attention to health and safety in science, and emphasise this aspect to their pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Pupils' work in art and design, including that of pupils with special educational needs is average for their ages. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school, with some that is good. Progress is generally sound for all pupils, at all levels of ability. Teachers encourage pupils to try to draw what they see in observational work. For example, when Year 3 were observing and drawing a person, the teacher asked them whether the shoulders were set wider than the outside of the ears. Pupils tried to work out the proportions of the face and where the eyes and mouth should be in relation to the rest of the person's head. Year 4 were seen drawing chairs, and some good work had been produced for homework. In the lesson, various angles of view were taken as pupils moved up or down, and the chair was set on its side or upside down. They learned to notice where the legs joined the seat and which materials were used in the design and making.

105. Evidence in pupils' sketch books shows that pupils in Year 1 have used wax crayons to produce pleasing colour blends and patterns, and pupils in Year 2 have made stencils from polystyrene tiles and used them to make single coloured designs. Older pupils work on architectural designs and drawings, such as a copy of St. Paul's Cathedral, or an Italianate style of building. Some work has been done on painting and drawing after the style of famous artists, such as van Gogh and Matisse. There is a limited link with information and communication technology, whereby pupils create designs on the computer, but this is not developed fully across all classes.

106. The range of the curriculum is satisfactory although it is limited. For example, there are few examples of collage or evidence of colour experiments or looking into texture. Pupils are, however,

learning to look more carefully at what they are drawing or painting and asking themselves good questions about form and pattern, with teachers' help. The work on famous artists is broadening pupils' experience and understanding of various styles of art, such as Impressionism. Older pupils are also learning to evaluate their own and others' work and to see points where they might improve.

107. Teachers use a good range of source books and pictures to stimulate pupils' imagination. The range of media used is satisfactory and pupils are learning techniques such as the tangrams in Year 6. Pupils in Year 6 have illustrated the stories they wrote for Year 1 pupils. As pupils progress through the school, they learn to be more organised and tidy in their art and design work, and several projects are done in conjunction with design and technology, such as the slippers designed and made in Year 6, and the Sukkoth shelters made in Year 3 for religious education.

108. The co-ordinator bases the school's art and design curriculum on the schemes of work produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. She is very new to the post and the schemes have been in operation for only two terms, so there has been no opportunity to monitor the teaching and learning, or to modify the school's curriculum. Resources are adequate for teachers to use appropriate materials to fulfil their planning, enabling pupils to experience a satisfactory range of media and techniques. There is an artist who visits the school occasionally. A weakness in art and design is the lack of assessment procedures to gauge pupils' progress and raise standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average, which broadly reflects the findings of the previous inspection at Key Stage 2 but is lower than the standards seen at Key Stage 1. As it was not possible to observe any lessons in design and technology, due to the school's timetabling arrangements, this judgement is based upon an analysis of pupils' work and photographic evidence compiled by the coordinator. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their skills in designing and making. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve soundly. There are no differences in attainment between boys and girls.

110. An analysis of teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is satisfactory. The teachers achieve an appropriate balance between designing, making and evaluating. By the age of seven, pupils have made a variety of moving vehicles, using different materials and joining techniques. They have learned to follow their design sheets as closely as possible. These include the materials which the pupils intend to use, the steps they will take and carefully labelled diagrams. Some vehicles incorporate fixed wheels on moving axles; others have wheels that move around fixed axles. The pupils have evaluated their work and have suggested ways in which they might improve next time. There is evidence that the pupils have experienced some food technology, for example in designing and making a fruit salad. Pupils in Year 1 have used construction kits to make moveable and stationary models.

111. By the age of eleven, most pupils have a sound understanding of the design process as they clarify their ideas using technical vocabulary and clearly labelled diagrams, with accurate measurements. Year 6 pupils have designed and made slippers, using a variety of fabrics. They think of who will use their products and they evaluate the finished articles, thinking of ways of making improvements in the future. In a Year 5 project, the teacher encouraged the pupils to evaluate the musical instruments they had made from a variety of materials and to evaluate the work of others. Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully, suggesting ways in which they might improve: "You could have added a greater variety of thickness to give more choice; you did try to improve the look of the box". In Year 4, the teacher encouraged pupils to think of their customers and this helped in the

making of some effective purses for young children. The pupils learned about the size of stitching and which fabrics would be most suitable for their purpose.

112. The very recently appointed coordinator has made a satisfactory start in managing the subject, although she recognises the need to monitor the pupils' achievements and to devise whole school procedures for assessing their attainment and progress. There is a good policy document, which emphasises the contribution that design and technology can make in other subjects. Planning is soundly based on national guidelines, although the school has yet to adapt these to its own particular needs. There are adequate resources to support learning. The subject makes a sound contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development. Year 3 pupils, for example, have used a variety of materials to make effective masks inspired by the Chinese New Year.

GEOGRAPHY

113. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average, which broadly reflects the findings of the previous inspection at Key Stage 2 but is lower than the findings at Key Stage 1. Most pupils are making sound progress in developing their geographical skills and knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs, together with the few for whom English is an additional second language, achieve well. Boys and girls attain equally.

114. By the age of seven, the pupils have a sound knowledge of features within the locality. They talk about attractive and unattractive features of the village and about how the school environment might be made safer. They make simple plans of the school car park. They use their mathematical skills to record their findings of a local traffic survey. Pupils make some comparisons between life in Sutton Valence and that on a Scottish island and have used their literacy skills to write letters home about an imaginary visit to the island. They know some of the characteristic features of a seaside village and geographical terms such as 'harbour' and 'beach'. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is good, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. In a well-planned Year 2 lesson, the teacher made effective use of colourful posters and careful questioning and this had a good impact on the pupils' understanding of the differences in lifestyle between Britain and Mexico. Questions such as "Is this room in the old or new part of the house?" developed the geographical skills of careful observation and made the pupils think carefully. The teacher had prepared resources well and made the lesson really exciting by allowing the pupils to taste some tortillas and dips. This further enhanced their awareness of Mexican culture. The teacher made useful links with literacy, as the pupils had to fill in some speech bubbles with appropriate words. She also used a support teacher and learning support assistant effectively to help with groups. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher placed an appropriate emphasis on the development of early mapping skills and this had a sound impact on the pupils' ability to draw simple plans of their route to school. She supported the development of speaking and listening skills, as the pupils talked about these routes. She also made useful links with mathematics, as the pupils contributed to a class bar chart of different ways in which they travel to school.

115. It was not possible to observe any geography lessons at Key Stage 2, but an analysis of planning and of pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The previous inspection found that teaching varied from very good to poor. The teachers maintain an appropriate balance between the development of mapping skills, such as knowledge of Ordnance Survey map symbols and grid references, and the acquisition of knowledge, such as the characteristic features of mountain environments. They appreciate the impact of fieldwork on learning. Year 5 pupils have visited Horton Kirby and have studied the River Darent. They have a basic understanding of the water cycle and of the features of a river valley from source to mouth. As part of a homework project, these pupils have produced some good work on rivers, such as the Medway and the Thames,

often including photographs and indicating sound use of information and communication technology. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their research skills. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have used various sources of information to find out about places such as South America, Australia and France.

116. The co-ordinator provides sound management of the subject. She has developed a clear policy. Planning is soundly based on national guidelines and the co-ordinator recognises that these will need to be adapted to the school's own needs. She has used a recent visit to Reunion to create some stimulating displays about this Indian Ocean island and to enhance the pupils' understanding of a different culture. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is further enhanced by raising their awareness of environmental concerns and the need for conservation of resources. They also had talks last year from visitors from Nepal and Japan. The co-ordinator recognises the need for more monitoring of the pupils' achievements and for the development of whole school procedures for assessing the pupils' progress. Learning resources are broadly adequate, but there not enough globes, up to date atlases and computer software. Worthwhile visits to places such as Horton Kirby and Yalding Fen enhance pupils' learning.

HISTORY

117. In Year 2, standards in history are average. This is in line with the judgement of the previous inspection. Pupils show sound early research skills and have a suitably developed sense of chronology for their age. They learn to use vocabulary indicating an awareness of the passing of time and discuss some of the ways in which objects, such as toy cars, can be 'old' and 'new'. In their study of Victorian times, Year 2 pupils have a sound knowledge of Florence Nightingale, and how she helped improve conditions for soldiers in hospital. They show a good awareness of how life then compares with that of today, and the changes that have taken place in places such as holiday resorts.

118. In Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average, and of a higher standard than that reported in the previous inspection. They have a good depth of factual knowledge and understanding of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Tudor times and the Royal Family in Britain. They have a clear insight into the way that people lived at different periods and the important events that shaped their lives. They use their good literacy skills well to write in depth about the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece, and pick out important social issues about the role of women at that time. They show a good understanding of chronology and construct simple time-lines from their knowledge. Pupils develop a good historical vocabulary because teachers place great emphasis on the use and understanding of the correct terminology to describe events. Throughout the school, pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs achieve good standards, relative to their previous attainment. More able pupils achieve well, and benefit from the school's interesting selection of computer programs to aid their independent research.

119. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning in history is good in both key stages. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. At both key stages, teachers show confidence in teaching the subject, use appropriate vocabulary, focus well on historical skills and have high expectations of all groups of pupils. These qualities give pupils a thorough knowledge of history, and challenge all of them to produce their best work. Strengths in the teaching of history and its effect on learning were evident in a Year 5 lesson about how life has changed since 1948. The lesson started briskly with a good review of pupils' previous learning, and the teacher made it clear what learning was expected in this lesson by all groups of pupils. Demanding questions on social changes fired at all pupils were followed by the teacher asking high attaining groups to consider how this pattern of change is likely to continue. Group work which followed continued this pattern: all pupils used resources appropriate to their capabilities, and more able groups achieved very high standards as they conducted

their own research. By the end of a busy lesson, all pupils had made very good progress, and learned much about how conditions change in history, and why.

120. A sound policy supports the teaching of the subject and the school makes good use of the units of work in the nationally recommended curriculum guidelines. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the future development of history in the school. Her monitoring of resources has identified gaps, including the use of information and communication technology, and these have been addressed well. Curricular provision is enriched by visits to museums to give pupils interesting experiences of 'real' historical sources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards in Year 2 are average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The pupils enjoy their computer work and generally make sound progress in developing information and communication skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language achieve well. There is no difference in attainment between boys and girls.

122. By the age of seven, most pupils are gaining confidence in using computers and communicate their ideas using text and pictures. With help from adults, they select and change fonts. They use the keyboard, slowly but generally with reasonable accuracy, to write their names and simple sentences. They are becoming familiar with the language of computers, such as 'keyboard', 'monitor', 'shift', and 'delete'. The quality of teaching and learning in the Year 2 lesson that was observed was good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, when teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Direct teaching of skills, together with good questioning and appropriate use of technical language, had a positive impact on the pupils' learning of keyboard skills. The teacher made good use of textbooks to show how word-processed work is usually easier to read than handwriting. Some pupils were able to program a floor turtle to negotiate obstacles on the floor.

123. Standards overall in Year 6 are below average. This is a decline from the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be satisfactory. Many pupils are making sound progress and those with special educational needs achieve well relative to their capabilities. The pupils enjoy computer work and many benefit from having computers at home. Nevertheless, the school has failed to keep pace with the progress made by schools nationally over the past three years. By the age of eleven, the pupils confidently communicate and handle information through text, graphs and pictures, and they are able to load, save, print and retrieve their work. However, they have insufficient opportunities for control, modelling or monitoring change. Until the new computer suite is finished in the summer, the pupils cannot access the Internet or communicate by electronic mail. Standards in basic word processing are good. Year 6 pupils use these skills well in persuasive writing in English, by producing job applications and curriculum vitae, and colourful tourist guides to Maidstone. They have combined text and graphics effectively in producing interesting stories, which they later read to younger pupils. This is a good example of the subject contributing to the pupils' social development. The quality of teaching and learning in a Year 4 lesson observed was good and this is an improvement on the previous inspection, which judged teaching to be satisfactory. Direct, step-by-step teaching had a positive impact on the pupils' understanding of how to use the spell check facility. The teacher emphasised the limitations of this facility and helped them learn how to delete mistakes not recognised by the spell checker: "Why do we still need to have power over the computer?" In teaching the skills of editing drafted work, the teacher succeeded in getting the pupils to recall previous learning of the use of italics and bold print, underlining, cut and paste and enlarging.

124. The headteacher is responsible for managing the subject, which is currently the main curricular priority for the school. He has produced a clear policy and a thorough three-year action plan.

Expenditure has been well targeted on staff training, which is due to take place later in the summer term, and on the new computer suite. Although there is already an adequate number of up-to-date computers in classrooms, the completion of the new networked suite is intended to ensure that the full requirements of the National Curriculum are met, which is currently not the case. Planning is soundly based on national guidelines, but there is no whole school system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The previous inspection found that there was little use of information and communication technology in other subjects. This is no longer the case. In English, Year 2 pupils have used computers to support word work. Key Stage 2 pupils search for historical information from CD ROMs and have used databases to support their work in mathematics and science. Year 5 pupils used computers to highlight main and subordinate clauses in an English lesson and, in a science lesson, Year 6 pupils used spreadsheets to record the changing temperature of water in containers with different numbers of ice cubes.

MUSIC

125. During the inspection, it was possible to observe the teaching of music only in Years 2 and 6 due to timetabling arrangements. In addition to these lessons, inspectors attended collective worship and hymn practice, and teachers' planning was examined. Judgements are based on this evidence and on discussions with teachers and pupils. Indications are that the standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. In the previous inspection, standards were above average at Key Stage 1 and average at Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language also achieve good standards and there are no differences in attainment between girls and boys.

126. The evidence indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 1, which is the same as the judgement in the previous inspection. In the lesson observed in Year 2, pupils created a musical pattern and explored how to use different parts of the body for percussion. They selected and organised sounds to create their own composition, which they recorded on paper, using a key to identify their chosen symbols. The teacher helped pupils to improve their ability to create a musical pattern by encouraging them to concentrate on following the patterns of cards representing hands and feet on a display board. Pupils gained experience of different techniques using 'body percussion', such as tapping their knees and shoes and clicking their tongues. The teacher encouraged them to think for themselves about the techniques they were using and the patterns they were creating. Through discussion, pupils worked out how to use a key to identify percussion movements, such as stamping their feet, when creating and recording their own composition. The teacher moved the lesson along at a good pace when pupils worked in pairs to compose their own musical patterns. As a result of the teacher's good management of the class, pupils concentrated well and attained good standards in their work. In assemblies, pupils sang familiar songs confidently and tunefully, which showed that they had been taught well.

127. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is also good, which represents an improvement since the previous inspection. In the lesson observed in Year 6, pupils explored how lyrics can be generated and organised and how musical structures are used in songs. They identified how repetition can make the words and melody easier to remember. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and expertise were communicated very well to the pupils and the lesson contained a high level of challenge. The imaginative use of a selection of headlines as a stimulus for writing a chorus was highly effective in showing pupils how lyrics reflect the time and place in which they are composed, and that they have cultural, historical and social meaning. Pupils worked hard to create their own chorus in a limited time, and some of the results were of a very high standard. For example, one included an underlying ostinato effect to reflect the sound of train wheels on a track. In a whole school singing practice, pupils sang 'This is the Day' in two parts, very confidently and with very good

pitch and awareness of rhythm. They then sang 'Shalom', firstly in unison, then as a round, each group maintaining its part very capably. Finally, pupils sang 'Kumbaya', accompanied by nine pupils playing treble and descant recorders, 14 on keyboards, one on cello and one playing the flute. They all played and sang well, led by three teachers who had very high expectations of their performance and who joined in with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.

128. The co-ordinator for the subject is an ex-professional musician, with a very high level of expertise, which she uses very effectively to develop the subject throughout the school. In addition, several other teachers have good expertise in music, which also helps to ensure that the subject enjoys a high profile at both key stages and that expectations of the pupils' performance remain high. The school has adopted the scheme of work published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which staff are evaluating critically in order to ensure that it meets the school's needs. The co-ordinator has ensured that there is a good range of resources to support teaching and learning in the subject. She has not had the opportunity to observe teaching in other classes, but supports colleagues very well by offering ideas and support for those who lack confidence and expertise. A good range of extracurricular activities includes a choir and three recorder groups, one of which is for pupils in Key Stage 1. The curriculum is enhanced by visiting musicians, school concerts and productions and participating in musical events with other schools in the local area. The subject meets statutory requirements.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Pupils' attainment in physical education is average throughout the school. In Year 2, pupils combine running, jumping and walking movements into suitable sequences with appropriate levels of co-ordination. Their games skills are average. Most throw and catch balls with reasonable skill, and hit with a bat with confidence. They get out the equipment quickly and safely, but often take time to respond to instructions. Pupils are aware of the effects of exercise on their heart and lungs and understand why they warm up before vigorous exercise. Although swimming is not part of the National Curriculum at this key stage, Year 2 pupils swim twice a week in the school's pool, and many do so with good skills.

130. In Year 6, whilst pupils' skills in all areas are average, their level of fitness is below that normally found, and many are out of breath by the end of the warm up. A few pupils, however, perform to a high standard, and the school has two girls among the fastest runners in Kent for their age. In games, pupils work hard at developing skills associated with balls, and throw, control and hit them with average skill. They play competitive games against other schools, with reasonable success. In gymnastics, pupils put together a good sequence of moves, observe each other's work carefully, and improve their own performance as a result. They have a good understanding of why they need to warm up before exercise, and a few name the correct muscle groups that are being stretched. By Year 6, pupils swim to a good standard, and benefit from three lessons a week in the summer in the school's pool.

131. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in the Key Stage 2 classes. Teachers plan lessons well to give pupils a good range of stimulating and safe experiences. These ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to develop a wide range of skills. Teachers allow pupils to warm up carefully, and demonstrate skills well, using more able pupils effectively to illustrate teaching points. This has a good effect on pupils' learning as they are able to refine their movements, and improve their performance. Only one lesson was seen in the Key Stage 1 classes, which was satisfactory, and gave pupils some good teaching of ball skills. In Key Stage 2, the teaching is good overall, and pupils make good gains in their learning. The key to the good teaching lies in the development of basic skills, and having such good control of pupils' behaviour that they make the best

use of their time. Pupils are organised quickly into groups, and the teacher has time to focus on developing pupils' skills, and then extend these as they grow more confident. In one of the best lessons, the teacher started by revising previous work on balances, teaching by very good demonstration how pupils could develop these into a sequence and then leaving them to come up with their own. Pupils worked hard to refine their sequence, practised to perfect each move and then performed to the whole class. Their interesting moves at the end showed that all had made good progress, and had a much better understanding of how to make a series of balances than they had at the start.

132. The subject is overseen capably by the co-ordinator, who has a keen interest in physical education. There is a good scheme of work, and the curriculum includes appropriate opportunities for all aspects of physical education. There is a good action plan to raise standards further, particularly in football, netball and athletics. The school has a good-sized hall, a swimming pool and good hard and grassed areas for games. There is a reasonable supply of resources, and a good range of extra-curricular sessions help to boost standards, especially running, netball, football and rounders.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Pupils' attainment, at both key stages, exceeds the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, and this represents good improvement since the last inspection. The subject, together with collective worship, makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The caring atmosphere of the school is reflected in the teaching and learning of religious education and, in particular, pupils are taught to respect others' beliefs and practices. All pupils make good progress in the subject, including those who have special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 1, with some that is very good. In the lessons observed, pupils were always fully absorbed in their work. For example, in Year 1, pupils were learning about Hinduism. They had previously seen saris and handled them, and they understood that special ones are worn on very special occasions. In general, they learnt very well in this lesson with plenty of 'hands on' activity to reinforce the learning. Pupils in Year 2 know about the Jewish Passover meal. In the lesson observed, the teacher made good use of resources such as herbs, including a whole root of horseradish, unleavened bread, and other symbolic things such as the lamb bone used in Passover meals. Pupils were enthralled to see these 'treasures' appearing from the bag and they learnt well, listening to the story and eagerly answering questions about Moses and the Exodus. Their depth of knowledge is above average. Previous work includes harvest, a Dutch Christmas story and work about the Jewish Torah. Pupils in Year 2 were very knowledgeable about the scrolls and knew that they must not be touched by hand, the reader using a pointer. They know about the events of Palm Sunday. The quality and quantity of pupils' written work are variable, but this is more than compensated for by pupils' knowledge and understanding when talking about stories and events they have studied.

135. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is good. Pupils cover a good range of topics and world religions, and know about them in greater detail than is usually found. Year 3 pupils have studied the stories about Christmas, and later discovered all about a synagogue, the festivals of Purim, and Sukkoth, and the origins of the festival called Hanukkah in Judaism. As pupils progress through the school, their knowledge increases in depth and detail. Year 4 pupils understand some of the signs and symbols used in different religions, such as the Star of David, the crescent, and the cross. They know what is found in a church and understand the uses for the various pieces of furniture. They have also learnt about some of the miracles and parables of Jesus. In Year 5, pupils study Islam, and they know about the revelations to the Prophet that resulted in the holy book, the Qur'an. They

have compared Lent and Ramadan. Later, in work on Christianity, they studied the stories of Mary and Joseph and the wise men in some detail. Sikhism is studied in Year 6 and pupils learn well from video tapes and the use of other resources. They have a sound understanding of the symbolism of the 'Five K's'. In general, pupils' written work is tidy and well presented. They clearly enjoy religious education and teachers provide activities and things to watch and handle that enhance learning well.

136. A strength of the subject is the enthusiastic leadership from the co-ordinator, who has ensured that the amount of time that is allocated to the study of each religion is higher than average. This is raising standards well, and pupils have the opportunity to learn more detail and in greater depth. She organises extra help in the form of in-service training for teachers who request this, and provides very good support for colleagues in this subject. The schemes of work have been adapted to match the needs of the locally agreed syllabus, including the changes incorporated in the latest county guidelines and the nationally agreed schemes. The result is good planning with a well-balanced and broad curriculum. Assessment of what pupils have learnt and understood is insufficient, although the nationally agreed schemes do provide opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' progress. Resources are good and pupils have the chance to see and handle religious objects, which enhances their interest and learning very well. Plans for development are good and these include more resources and the inclusion of a week of focused study, with strong links to other subjects such as geography, history and music.