

INSPECTION REPORT

East Stour Primary School

South Willesborough

Ashford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118367

Headteacher: Mrs G Parsons

Reporting inspector: Kathryn Taylor
22424

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 4th February 2000

Inspection number: 191676

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	South Willesborough Ashford Kent
Postcode:	TN24 ODW
Telephone number	01233 630 820
Fax number:	01233 632 768
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Lady Sheila Barry
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kathryn Taylor	<i>Registered inspector</i>	History; Geography.	Standards; The characteristics and effectiveness of the school; The school's results and pupils' achievements; Teaching and learning; Leadership and management.
Elaine Parrish	<i>Lay Inspector</i>		Pupils' welfare, health and safety; Partnership with parents and carers; Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
Ted Cox	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Information technology; Music; Provision for the Under-fives.	
Gavin Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Religious education; Physical education.	Quality and range of opportunities for learning.
Mohindar Gallowalia	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Art, Design and technology; Special educational needs; Equal opportunities; English as an additional language.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The inspection contractor was:

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

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

East Stour is a primary school for boys and girls aged from four to eleven. There are currently 292 full time pupils on roll, which is about average for a primary school. The number of pupils in each year group and in the school as a whole fluctuates. The school's location and the current growth of Ashford mean there is a high degree of population and pupil mobility and therefore a variation in the number of pupils entering and leaving the school at age four and at other times in their school life. The school's capacity is for two-form entry, although currently there are approximately one and a half forms in each year group, and, in Key Stage 2, pupils are currently arranged in mixed age classes. The school does not have its own nursery. However, about two thirds of children have some nursery experience before they start school. At the time of inspection, twenty-four children in the reception classes were under the age of five. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average, and their skills in language are well below average. Currently 89 pupils in the school are identified as having special educational needs, five of whom have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion on the special needs register, 30 per cent, is higher than that found in many other schools. Six pupils attending the school come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Six pupils speak English as an additional language. Twenty six per cent of all pupils are currently entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average when compared with schools nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

East Stour is an improving school. Pupils' standards of work and rates of progress are broadly average and improving. Standards by the time pupils leave school are good when compared with similar schools and when compared with pupils' attainment levels when they start at the school. Pupils are making good progress in literacy and in some aspects of mathematics. The vast majority of teaching is at least satisfactory and much of it is good or better. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school and learning are good, and the school has established very good links with parents. The school is well led. The headteacher, staff and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are committed to its future development and improvement. The school offers at least satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- In 1999, standards attained by pupils in the National Curriculum tests at age 11 are above average when compared with similar schools.
- Teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons and, in just over half of all lessons, it is good or better.
- The teaching of literacy is good, as is much of the teaching of numeracy.
- There are very good links with parents.
- The provision for the children under the age of five is good.
- The school is well led and managed and there is a clear educational direction.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There has been a high staff turnover and too many temporary teachers. This is unsettling for pupils and means that sometimes their education lacks continuity.
- Pupils' standards in information technology by age 11 are below average.
- Standards of pupils' work, although improved, are not yet high enough.
- The curriculum for some subjects needs to be planned in more detail. This will strengthen the teaching and pupils' learning.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection three years ago, the school was identified as having serious weaknesses. Since that time the school has made good improvements and given good attention to the key issues identified in the last report. The quality of teaching is now much better and better attention is given to the needs of higher attaining pupils than at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' overall standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school have improved significantly. Good improvements have been made to the curriculum and to assessment. The provision for the under fives has been improved and is now good. Parents are more involved in the life of the school; they are valued and made welcome. The leadership and management have been strengthened. School development planning is now carefully prioritised and targets for improvements have been set in a realistic timescale. Pupils' work and progress and the quality of teaching are regularly supported and monitored. The role of governors has been strengthened and extended. The school is now well placed to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	D	C	B
Mathematics	D	E*	C	B
Science	D	E	C	B

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E
<i>very low</i>	E*

Similar schools means schools nationally with a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals

This table shows that, in the tests in 1999, at age 11 pupils' overall standards in English, mathematics and science were broadly average when compared to schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, results in all three subjects were above average. During the past four years there have been good overall improvements in the tests at age 11. The school's

targets for the current Year 6 pupils anticipate a lower percentage of pupils attaining the expected level in the tests than in the previous year. This is because there are a higher number of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 cohort. The school is on course to attain higher standards and meet its targets in 2001. Inspection judgements about the standards of work seen during the inspection are that standards are below average at age five and broadly average by the end of each key stage. Pupils' attainments are satisfactory and there is an improving trend. However, there is potential to improve standards further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment.
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Boys and girls and children from different backgrounds play well together.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good. Pupils are kind and helpful to each other. Pupils and staff respect and value each other. Pupils' personal development is supported well.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Children are keen to come to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

In 98 per cent of all lessons seen, teaching is at least satisfactory. In 42 per cent of all lessons teaching is good and in 12 per cent it is very good. Throughout the school, literacy is taught well and much of the teaching in mathematics is good. The teaching of children who are under the age of five is consistently good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum.	The curriculum for the children under the age of five is good. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 covers all subjects, although currently in some classes too much time is given to some subjects and not enough to others.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	The provision has been improved recently and is satisfactory overall. Pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and those with greater needs are supported well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	Good. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well by their class teachers and by the visiting teacher who is employed to support individual pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development.	The provision is good overall. Pupils' personal, moral and social development is supported well. The school has a strong moral code and, from the time they start at the school, pupils' social development is given a high priority. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	Pupils are well cared for. Their safety and welfare are given a very high priority by all staff who work at the school

Literacy and numeracy strategies are implemented well. Curriculum plans for some subjects need to be extended. The provision for information technology fails to cover aspects relating to control technology.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and has worked very hard to improve the school and address its weaknesses. She has been successful in making improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and raising the schools' standing within the local community. A good staff team is developing and there is a firm commitment to continue to raise standards. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators, many of whom are fairly new to the school, are committed to the school and eager to develop work in subjects further in order to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are interested, take their role very seriously and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are supportive and involved in the school. Governors regularly monitor and evaluate what is happening in school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has set up systems to regularly check pupils' attainments and progress from the time when they first start at the school. The headteacher and staff are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have set clear priorities for improving and developing the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	The money available to the school has been limited in the past few years because of previous overspending of monies which then had to be repaid, and because of the high cost involved when temporary teachers have been employed to cover for vacancies or staff absences. Nevertheless, the school makes good use of the available money and of specific grants. Staff and resources available to the school are used well.

Many teachers have left the school during the past few years and others have joined. There are enough suitably qualified teachers, but some are on temporary contracts and a number are fairly new to teaching and to the school. There are enough learning support assistants, and they provide good support for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The accommodation is very good. Resources are satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents say their children enjoy school. • They feel their children are encouraged to work hard and do their best, which helps them to make good progress. • Many parents say staff are approachable and keep parents well informed. • The school works closely with parents. • Behaviour is good. • Parents feel the teaching is good. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not happy with the amount of homework. • Some are concerned that their child has had a number of teachers when the class teacher has been absent, or when the teacher has not been permanent. • Some feel they would like more information about their child's progress. • Some feel there are insufficient extra curricular activities.

Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. In the view of the inspection team, the information already provided for parents is good and the school readily responds to any requests for extra information. Levels of homework were found to be generally satisfactory. The school's homework policy is clearly stated in the prospectus. The inspection team acknowledges the views of parents on lack of extra curricular activities for pupils at Key Stage 1; however, activities for pupils at Key Stage 2 are good. The school has experienced some staffing problems, and sometimes has to rely on teaching staff agencies which determine how long the school can keep the supply teacher. The inspection team identified in its issues for action that the headteacher and governors need to find ways to attract staff and to retain those they already have.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children start school, their overall levels of attainment are below average and their language skills are well below average. Because of this low starting point and the lack of free nursery places in the area, the headteacher, staff and governors have been very proactive in deciding to offer all the under-fives a full year in the reception class. Currently, the Local Education Authority provides funding for children to start school in the term in which they will be five. Baseline testing when children start school at the beginning of the autumn term, and re-testing at the end of the reception year, show that this is having a very positive effect on pupils' standards by the time they start in Year 1. During their time in the reception classes, the children who are under the age of five make good progress in all the areas of learning so that, by the time they are five years old, standards, although below average, are closer to those expected for pupils of this age.
2. When analysing pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of each key stage, it is important to take account of the school's higher than average percentage of pupils with special educational needs, and the larger percentage of pupils with special needs in some year groups than in others. There is also high mobility in the school population so that not all pupils taking the tests will have spent all their primary school years at this school. For example, in the current academic year forty more pupils have joined the school than left it in the previous year. These pupils have taken up places in year groups other than reception.
3. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests and tasks at the age of seven, the percentages of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level, Level 2, in reading (68 per cent), in mathematics (68 per cent), and in science (70 per cent) are all well below the national average. In writing, the percentage attaining Level 2 (48 per cent) is very low, being in the bottom 5 per cent of all schools nationally. The proportion gaining the higher level (Level 3) in reading and mathematics is well below average, in writing is below average and in science is average. When the school's results are compared with those of similar schools, pupils' attainment in reading and writing is well below average, and very low in mathematics and science. There were no significant differences in the number of boys and girls attaining the expected levels in the tests at the end of Key Stage 1. Although this is a depressing picture overall, in 1999 the percentage of pupils in the Year 2 cohort who had special educational needs was high. Inspection evidence confirms this, showing that a high percentage of pupils, now in Year 3, experience difficulty with basic reading and writing.
4. The school has taken action to improve standards by age seven, by giving all pupils a full year in Reception classes and appointing an experienced teacher to teach the Year 2 class, and to prepare them more fully for the tests at the end of the key stage than has been the case in the past. In the current Year 2, class standards are much better than those attained in previous years, and the overall attainment of this cohort of pupils is close to that expected for pupils of this age.

5. In the tests in 1999 at the end of the Key Stage 2, the percentages of pupils achieving the expected level, Level 4, or above in English (76 per cent) and in mathematics (72 per cent) are both close to the national average. In science, the percentage (88 per cent) is above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 5) was below the national average in science and English, but close to the national average in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' overall results at this key stage were above average in 1999. Although girls do slightly better in English and science, these differences are not significant. In Key Stage 2, there has been a sharp increase in standards during the past four years. For example, the results in 1996 show only 29 per cent of pupils reaching the expected level in English, 20 per cent in mathematics and 14 per cent in science.

6. The school's targets for the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics by the age eleven in the year 2000 are lower than those achieved by pupils in 1999. However, the percentage of pupils on the special needs register in the current Year 6 cohort is above the school's average. The school is set to at least meet its targets for the current year and for Year 2001. These targets are properly informed by sound tracking and projection procedures.

7. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' attainment in English is below average by the end of Key Stage 1 and average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' throughout the school make good progress in English. In mathematics, overall standards of the current Year 2 class are average, but those of the current Year 6 are slightly below average because of a greater number of pupils with special educational needs. In mathematics progress in number, shape, space and measures is good. More consistent work in problem solving, and investigations and data handling is needed to ensure the same good progress in these aspects of mathematics. Standards in science are average by the end of both key stages and progress is satisfactory. In information technology, standards are close to those expected by the end of Key Stage 1, but by the end of Key Stage 2 they are unsatisfactory in the use of control technology and in sensing and interpreting physical features. In work and lessons seen in all other subjects during the inspection, pupils' standards are broadly average and progress is sound.

8. The school has been successful in raising pupils' attainment levels since the last inspection through a variety of means, including improving the quality of teaching and raising teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve. Although standards are higher, they are as yet not high enough and further improvements are necessary. The emphasis on developing the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy is having a positive effect. Strengths identified in these areas can be further built on. Relative weaknesses, such as the insufficient attention given to developing pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics, and the insufficient attention to developing pupils' research skills at Key Stage 2, will, if addressed, have a positive effect on attainment levels overall. There is also the potential to raise further pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy through planned and consistent provisions across the curriculum. Importantly, the establishment of a stable teaching staff will give the school the opportunity to further develop work in all subjects. The strong determination of the headteacher and existing staff to work together to continually improve their quality of teaching and learning and their capacity to succeed was very evident during the inspection period.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Progress, However, is good when pupils receive one to one or small group support, as seen for example, in a mathematics lesson, when pupils partitioning and recombining two or three digit numbers made good progress and developed confidence through the experience of achieving success. In a number of sessions observed where pupils were taught within a small group, they made good progress in basic reading and writing skills. The school is currently running a number of specific phonics based programmes with groups of pupils from both key stages in its endeavours to improve and extend pupils' skills. The progress of pupils learning English as an additional language is good. Teachers give good attention to ensuring pupils understand and acquire specific vocabulary.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The good attitudes of pupils identified in the previous report have been maintained. During the inspection, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be at least satisfactory in all but one lesson and good or very good in ninety per cent of lessons. Parents strongly support the school in its high expectations of their children's behaviour, and appreciate the opportunities given to help pupils become mature and responsible. Pupils' personal development is good and there are very good relationships throughout the school.

11. Children under five settle quickly into the life of the school. They adapt happily to well-established routines and make good progress in their personal and social development, acquiring good attitudes to their work and the ability to concentrate. Calm and well-organised teaching encourages them to persevere with tasks, and they do their best to work to a good standard. They enjoy taking an active part in their lessons, and they are helped to develop a real sense of achievement through pleasurable and rewarding activities. Children share resources, such as tabletop games, painting and construction equipment, willingly and take turns without fuss.

12. These good attitudes remain with pupils as they progress through the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and some bring in items from home to support their work and share with others, including work carried out at home. The school's considerable efforts to improve parents' understanding of the work their children do has had a good impact on pupils' attitudes. Good teaching in many lessons sparks their interest, and pupils respond by being inquisitive and eager to learn. Pupils maintain good attitudes and, in the best lessons, pupils are well motivated by the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and this adds to their achievement. Many pupils are keen to join in and to respond to teachers' questioning. Pupils' enthusiasm makes a valuable contribution to their learning. In a literacy session in a Reception class, for example, pupils were so engrossed in their work that they sighed as the lesson ended. In a lively delivery of a music lesson in the class of Year 5 and 6 pupils, the pupils responded well to the teacher, who worked imaginatively to capture pupils' interest and engage them fully in the lesson.

13. Standards of behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and around the school are good. The vast majority of pupils behave well at all times, but there are occasional pockets of unacceptable behaviour from a few boys in Key Stage 2. When anyone misbehaves, the situation is managed well and the learning opportunities of other pupils are not affected. There have been two fixed-term exclusions during the past year, but these were not given lightly and the governing body was both involved and kept fully informed. Pupils are

involved in drawing up their own class rules and good behaviour is positively reinforced with praise and with a system of rewards which pupils value and respond well to. This good behaviour has a positive impact on the progress pupils make. There is a strong sense of harmony in the playground where all pupils mix well. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection and boys and girls from different social and ethnic backgrounds played happily together. Pupils know that any incident of rough and aggressive behaviour must be reported to an adult and they are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously.

14. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils are very polite to staff and visitors and to each other; offering to help and holding doors open without waiting to be asked. The under-fives learn quickly to share and to help each other. In a physical education (PE) lesson in a reception class for example, children were observed helping one another to balance on the apparatus, and they waited patiently to take their turn with a minimum of intervention from the teacher. Pupils of all ages get on well together in lessons, supporting one another and listening attentively when other classmates are speaking. Pupils are encouraged to look after each other and they do this very well; a group of pupils in a Year 3 and 4 class were observed helpfully showing a new classmate around the school. Teachers help pupils think about the results of their actions and to be kind. Pupils sometimes applaud the good efforts of others, and one pupil was overheard complimenting his friend on a piece of work done well. Pupils with special needs and with English as an additional language are accepted, well integrated and treated respectfully by their peers.

15. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. They are encouraged to get involved in the daily life of the school from an early age, for example by helping to tidy up after lessons and by taking the registers to the office. By the time they reach Year 6, there is increasing scope for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative; for example by setting up the hall for assemblies and by helping the school secretary. Many pupils in Year 6 serve as good role models for other pupils. Pupils respond well when they are encouraged to work independently. For example, in the literacy hour, pupils work well on set tasks while the teacher is working with another group and, in a lesson in Year 1, one pupil was observed collecting a dictionary on his own initiative and then bringing one back for everyone in his group. Pupils take part in a self-assessment programme of their work each term, and are learning to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their own work and how they might improve.

16. Attendance is satisfactory, being very slightly below the national average. There are straightforward procedures for recording and reporting absences. Registration is carried out effectively in all classes, enabling lessons to start on time. Most parents support the school's drive to maintain regular attendance and punctuality and co-operate by explaining the reasons for absence promptly, but a few do not and have to be sent reminders. In the questionnaires, 96 per cent of parents said their children liked coming to school and inspection evidence confirms pupils' good attitudes to school.

17. The good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils, which are sustained throughout the school, and the very good relationships, are a good feature of the school, enabling teaching and learning to take place in a calm and often stimulating environment.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, which represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. In 42 per cent of lessons, teaching is good and in twelve per cent it is very good

19. The teaching of children who are under the age of five is good overall and is sometimes very good. This enables children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Lessons are planned well to incorporate a range of interesting activities and learning experiences, which develops children's interest. By ensuring good provision for children's personal development, and consistently reinforcing positive behaviour, teachers encourage good attitudes to learning. They have a very secure understanding of subjects and about how young children learn, and they use time and resources effectively. There are very good relationships between teachers and the children. The teachers and classroom assistants in the reception classes work well as a team to motivate and encourage children, and to provide a full range of learning opportunities.

20. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is good or better in just over half of all lessons seen. A strength of teaching is teachers' good knowledge and understanding of most subjects, which enables them to teach confidently and to maintain a good pace to the lesson. In religious education and information technology, teachers' expertise is less good than in other subjects. Teachers teach the basic skills of reading and writing well, and this has a very positive effect on pupils' standards in English by the time they leave the school.

21. Teachers have high expectations about what pupils will achieve, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection when expectations were described as too low. Occasionally, however, at Key Stage 2 expectations of some pupils' work are unrealistically high and the task presented is therefore too difficult for some of the pupils. The high turnover of teaching staff contributes to this difficulty, as sometimes problems arise because teachers are unsure of what pupils have learned in the past and need to give more attention to checking pupils' prior learning. Similarly, in some lessons, while there is a very brisk pace, teachers do not give sufficient attention to checking that all pupils understand before proceeding with the next part of the lesson.

22. Good attention is given to developing and extending pupils' vocabulary, not only in literacy lessons but also in numeracy and science lessons, and this is a very positive step in helping pupils to understand. This good practice can be extended to the teaching in all subjects. More attention needs to be given to raising teachers' awareness that, for a small minority of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2, poor understanding of basic vocabulary sometimes poses great difficulties for them in understanding both concepts being taught and instructions being given.

23. Pupils are consistently well managed. Teachers are firm but fair and they treat pupils with kindness and respect. This contributes to the very good relationships between teachers and pupils and encourages children to do their best.

24. The quality and detail of planning are satisfactory overall, and good in English and mathematics. Learning objectives are clear and these are shared with pupils, which helps them to understand the purpose of the work and the tasks set. In other subjects, there are occasionally inconsistencies in planning. Some teachers, especially those with least experience, would benefit from more detailed planning, particularly in subjects where there is a lack of detailed curriculum plans to refer to. The teaching methods used at Key Stage 1 are good and appropriate to the age and experience of pupils. At Key Stage 2, methods are satisfactory overall, although more attention needs to be given to varying methods used in teaching the range of subjects. This would enable lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to access the curriculum more easily, and would make the subjects more interesting for all pupils.

25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in withdrawal sessions is satisfactory overall and is good in some lessons. In class lessons, however, there are a few examples of teachers giving insufficient attention to ensuring that lower attaining pupils understand what is being taught, and occasionally placing too much reliance on learning support assistants to support pupils. These assistants provide good support for pupils, including those with statements. For example, in a science lesson when the pupils were analysing a science text, the good support improved the quality of pupils' work and helped them to improve their spelling of words involving long vowel sounds, such as 'light' and 'tight.'

26. The teaching of English is good throughout the school. The basic skills of phonics and grammar are taught well and good attention is given to developing pupils' writing. However, there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' reading and writing skills through and across the range of subjects because literacy development is not planned for outside of English lessons. Marking of pupils' work is very good, and guidance and targets are given which help pupils to know how to improve their work. Closer supervision and more guidance needs to be given to pupils, especially lower attaining pupils in relation to their independent reading and to developing the research and library skills of all pupils.

27. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall and is good in over half of lessons.

28. A significant feature of all mathematics lessons is the way in which the planning gives clear details of the learning objectives, helping the teachers to focus on their key teaching points throughout the lesson. There are insufficient opportunities to develop and apply pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

29. In all other subjects seen, the overall quality of teaching is at least sound. Although no information technology lessons were directly observed, inspection of teachers' plans shows that more attention needs to be given to certain aspects of the subject and to incorporating information technology into other areas of the curriculum.

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

30. The school provides a sound curriculum, which has good breadth and satisfactory balance. This shows good improvement since the last inspection, with policies and schemes of work having been completed for most subjects. Currently the school meets statutory requirements for the curriculum with the exception of information technology, where there are some omissions at Key Stage 2. Although the school meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, the way in which the school plans for this subject is not as supportive as it might be for both pupils and teachers. By adding French to the curriculum for its oldest pupils, the school not only recognises the importance of its position adjacent to an international rail terminal, but also adds breadth to the curriculum.

31. The school has appropriate provision for sex education, health education and drugs awareness and these are often taught through the Personal, Social and Health Education Programme which also includes Circle Time. In Circle Time, pupils sit together and, with close attention to the rules of 'the circle,' they express and listen to views concerning a range of topics. This provides them with good basis for many of the important decisions they will make in later life.

32. The curriculum for the children who are under five is good. The school plans well to meet the current recommendations for children of this age, and there is a smooth transition to the National Curriculum when children either reach their fifth birthday, or achieve the targets set out in the curriculum for children under five.

33. Much work has been done in the area of special educational needs provision in the current academic year and some good systems to target specific groups of pupils have also been set up. The special needs provision is satisfactory overall. However, pupils at the higher stages of the register of special needs, including those with statements of special educational need, are given good individual support. The quality of individual education plans is satisfactory overall. Whilst some have specific learning targets which make it easy to monitor measurable success, other targets are so general that progress towards them is more difficult to assess in the shorter term. Support assistant's help to overcome this problem by recording their observations about pupils' responses. Most of the individual educational plans reflect pupils' language difficulties. Mathematics targets are very few but, where they do exist, they are more specific.

34. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are taught English, mathematics and science in-groups where they have been set by ability. This is proving to be successful in raising overall attainment. There are times, however, when the teachers tend to focus too much on the average and more able pupils. Recent moves to add an extra group for pupils experiencing the most difficulty in mathematics, taught by the special needs co-ordinator, aim to redress this problem. However, a number of pupils in slightly higher groups still do not always receive wholly appropriate teaching.

35. The school has been proactive in introducing both the literacy and numeracy strategies a year in advance of the required start dates. Both are effective and have been implemented well. The planning for these lessons uses the recommended format and is carried out well. There are some minor discrepancies in the overall allocation of time for some subjects. The school is aware of this, and is waiting for the latest recommendations for the National Curriculum to be announced before deciding where to make changes in time allocation.

36. Despite its relatively isolated geographical position, the school has good links both with local schools and with the community at large. The school gains from being part of the South Ashford consortium of schools. Here, headteachers and other senior members of staff meet to discuss issues and give each other support over a wide range of subjects, thereby benefiting pupils in several schools. Relationships with the local playgroups and nurseries, together with the good relationships with the North School, all help to support the smooth transition of children and pupils from one establishment to the other.

37. The school is developing well its recent links with the McArthur Glen organisation, and has recently helped to design a logo for its adjacent shopping complex. Through its links with the Ashford Business Partnership, the school gains considerably from the help and support of local businesses, which plan to renovate the school's environmental area, including its pond. The grant from National Power was put directly into improving mathematics in the local community through helping pre-school children and their parents to understand the current initiatives in mathematics.

38. The school provides all of its pupils with a good selection of well-chosen visits and visitors to improve the first-hand nature of their learning. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have visited Ashford Parish Church as part of their work in religious education, and have travelled further afield to the Houses of Parliament to look at issues of citizenship. Years 3 and 4 visited Bewl Water as part of their geography fieldwork, while pupils in Year 2 visited a power station. Younger pupils have visited a rare breeds centre to study animals as part of their work in science and. These and many other activities bring to life many aspects of their work and help them make progress.

39. After school activities are well provided for pupils in Key Stage 2, but similar activities are not provided for pupils at Key Stage 1. Parents' responses to the parental questionnaire were therefore somewhat mixed in their views about the adequacy of extra-curricular provision. At Key Stage 2, six teachers give of their own time willingly to promote these activities and, during a week, over a hundred pupils will have taken part in clubs such as choir, recorders, writing, football and netball. These, together with the homework club, provide good support for Key Stage 2, and satisfactory enrichment overall. These activities give good support to pupils' social development.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

40. The provision for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, and for moral and social development it is good. The overall quality of provision is good, and makes an effective contribution to the school's ethos for learning and the general atmosphere in the school.

41. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development through the curriculum. Some of the provision is directly focused in assemblies. This takes the form of lighting a candle, using music to create a calm and reflective mood, and the telling of stories. Sometimes opportunities are provided for pupils to share their worries about their well-being, perhaps due to family difficulties, and others pray and send their good thoughts to alleviate these. However, not all assemblies make a similar contribution to pupils' spiritual development, and the contribution of subjects of the curriculum is also inconsistent although English, art and music make a good contribution. For example, in English, pupils are provided with opportunities to write creative and empathetic poems. Pupils' creativity is well provided for and is reflected through art and music. Celebrations of religious festivals expose pupils to human experiences beyond their immediate environment. However, there is the potential for the curriculum for religious education to make a far more significant impact on pupils' spiritual development than is currently the case.

42. The good provision for pupils' moral development includes opportunities to reflect, and to make rules that promote self-discipline and create a good learning environment. Pupils are made aware of the difference between right and wrong, and of concepts such as honesty, fairness, respect for truth and justice, and of the need to keep promises, through routine school practices and the good examples provided by their teachers. Bullying in any form is not accepted. Personal Social and Health Education time is well used to promote good morals through discussions about unsociable actions and occurrences.

43. Pupils' social development is well provided for through the school's caring ethos. Pupils are encouraged to think of their responsibility towards others. For example, pupils raise funds for the homeless. Presentations involving music raise awareness of the need for people to co-operate in various ways for the benefit of the whole community. Good opportunities for collaborative work are also provided, for example through practical work in science and design and technology.

44. The sound cultural provision includes the celebration of Christian and non-Christian festivals of the diverse British population. The curriculum and visits to places of interest also make a contribution. There are, however, opportunities for the curriculum to enhance pupils' cultural and spiritual development further, particularly that for religious education, history and geography.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The safe, caring and supportive environment of the school has a beneficial effect on the standards pupils achieve. Pupils' confidence in the security and support that the school provides helps them to concentrate on their learning. The good standards in pupils' welfare, support and guidance noted in the last inspection report have been maintained. Procedures to assess and monitor pupils' academic progress and personal development are also good, and have been improved since the last inspection

46. All staff make a positive contribution to the school's caring ethos and pay close attention to protecting pupils from harm and to promoting their health and safety. Teachers respond readily to pupils' needs. They value pupils' contributions in lessons and this helps to raise pupils' self-esteem. The school makes good provision for pupils on the higher levels of the special needs register, including those with statements of special need, and for those

pupils for whom English is an additional language. There is good liaison with outside support agencies. Learning support assistants are patient and encouraging and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. There are very good procedures for child protection and staff handle issues in a very sensitive manner. The health and safety policy is very well monitored and there are no outstanding issues. There are good arrangements for first aid, and fire drills are held regularly. School lunches are nourishing, and mealtime staff's kindly concern for pupils help to make it a pleasant part of the school day. All pupils are well supervised in the playground, where a particular feature of the school is the way in which all pupils play happily together.

47. There are good procedures to promote good behaviour and the school functions as a calm and well-ordered community. There is a good behaviour policy and procedures are applied consistently throughout the school. Ninety one per cent of parents who replied to the questionnaire felt that behaviour was good and inspection evidence confirms this. There is no evidence of bullying or harassment and the school makes very good use of circle time and assemblies to give pupils the confidence to talk about anything that worries them. There are very effective measures to promote good attendance and it is made clear to parents that they must inform the school if their child is absent.

48. There are now effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in the core subjects of mathematics English and science, and most teachers use this information effectively to guide their future plans. The school is also using this information to track pupils' progress as they move up the school and to set targets for individual and cohorts of pupils. Systems for assessing children under the age of five are good. Baseline testing is undertaken on entry to school. These assessments are used effectively to identify pupils' needs and to help set suitable learning targets. Re-testing at the end of the reception year gives a good picture of pupils' progress and identifies those pupils requiring additional support in Year 1. Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) are conducted at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and optional test used throughout Key Stage 2. Reading tests are regularly administered. The school analyses these results to identify possible gender variations and the information is beginning to be useful in identifying patterns in attainment and areas of the core curriculum in need of further emphasis or development. Assessment of pupils' progress in non-core subjects is not yet as well developed. However, the marking of pupils' work is regular and is of a very high standard.

49. Pupils' assessed work is kept in individual portfolios and good attention is given to communicating this information and passing on records at the end of the year. Teachers have a good picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in most aspects of their work, behaviour and personal development, and these are formally recorded in each pupil's individual profile. Procedures for early identification of those pupils who need additional help are sound, and the school follows the recommendations of the Code of Practice. The school takes care to acknowledge pupils' achievements, particularly when they have made efforts and tried hard. There is a good system of headteacher certificates which are greatly prized and which encourage pupils to achieve more. Each pupil has set targets related to their academic work, behaviour and personal development, which are monitored for success and discussed regularly with pupils and parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school has very effective links with parents, which make a positive impact on pupils' learning and the quality of life within the school. In the inspection questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting parents registered their strong support for the school. They particularly praise the efforts made by the headteacher to improve their understanding of the school's work and the good attention that is always given to their concerns. Inspection evidence entirely supports parents' high levels of satisfaction with the way in which the school works in partnership with them. This represents a marked improvement on the last inspection report.

51. The staff and the governors have put considerable thought into the way the school communicates with parents, and the quality of information it provides for them is good. An effective system of letters and newsletters keeps parents up to date with the curriculum and with school activities. The prospectus gives clear information about school routines, and introduces ways in which parents can support their child's learning at home. There are regular meetings to discuss various aspects of the curriculum, such as the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy, as well as consultation evenings where parents discuss the progress their child has made and an open afternoon when parents can observe lessons. Parents are given a comprehensive annual report on their children's attainment and progress, which include pupils' personal targets for improvement. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress and are encouraged to attend reviews of their progress towards targets identified in their individual education plans.

52. In the questionnaires, a significant minority of parents raised concerns about the amount of information they received about children's progress, about levels of homework and about the range of activities outside lessons. In the view of the inspection team, the information already provided for parents is good and the school readily responds to any requests for extra information. Levels of homework were found to be generally satisfactory, and consistent with a homework policy which is clearly stated in the prospectus.

53. The school actively encourages parents to become involved in the life of the school and provides a warm welcome. A Parents in Partnership forum has recently been set up, where parents can talk informally with the headteacher and staff on a twice termly basis about anything that concerns them or about new initiatives in education. Parents at the meeting prior to inspection spoke very enthusiastically about these meetings. Parents find staff helpful and approachable. School policies encourage teachers to involve parents, and several make a regular commitment to help in classrooms, to help maintain the school grounds and to accompany pupils on trips. The school greatly values any help that parents can give. Many parents have already signed the home/school partnership agreement and they help and co-operate readily, for example by listening to their children read at home and by reporting absences promptly. Many parents demonstrate their interest in the school by attending open evenings, coming to school assemblies, supporting school activities, and responding to questionnaires. In spite of the considerable efforts made by the school to involve parents, not all are yet fully involved in supporting their children's learning, for example, by listening to their children read at home. Attendance at curriculum evenings is sometimes disappointingly low.

54. There is a small but flourishing Parents' Association which contributes generously to school funds and which cements good relationships between parents and staff. Pupils benefit from the funds raised on their behalf and by the quality of relationships forged between home and the school. Parents are appreciative of the support given by the headteacher and staff to the Association's events and see this as practical evidence of the school's commitment to building a strong home/school partnership.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has worked well with the staff and governors to address the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection report, and this has led to good improvements in leadership and management. School development planning is now clearly prioritised and developments are set within a realistic timescale. The governors' role has been strengthened and extended.

56. The headteacher provides very good leadership and a clear educational direction. She is well respected by the staff, parents and pupils, and has created a good team spirit in which staff share their expertise and work well together for the benefit of pupils. Some senior managers are new to the school and others have been at the school for some time. An effective management team is now developing. The development of work in literacy, numeracy and science has been given very good attention in recent years and this has been effective in raising standards.

57. The school's development plan is very detailed and is linked to clear educational priorities. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and evaluated by the headteacher, core subject, and key stage co-ordinators, and this has been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The school meets its stated aims and has a good ethos. Each child is valued and respected as an individual. This helps them to develop self-esteem, very good relationships and the confidence to try to do their best. There is a firm commitment to continually raising standards and to ensuring that parents are satisfied with what the school provides.

58. The role of governors has been extended very well since the last inspection and they provide good leadership. There are some new governors who bring additional skills to the school. Governors remain interested, involved and very supportive of the school. Their meetings and those of its sub-committees take place regularly. Governors' role in strategic development and in monitoring the school's work is good. Monitoring visits take place regularly. The reports from these visits demonstrate a rigorous approach, which is enabling all governors to be better informed about standards in teaching and learning and to carry out their role as critical friend. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well overall, although in relation to information technology there is a need to ensure that all requirements are met.

59. There are sufficient teachers with a suitable range of qualifications to support the number of pupils and to deliver all subjects of the National Curriculum. However, two of the teachers are currently on temporary contracts. A further two classes are currently being taught by supply teaching staff as a result of one teacher being on maternity leave and another being absent due to sickness. In the last two years, eight teachers have left the school and seven more have joined the school which represents a very high staff turnover. This has

clearly created severe difficulties for the school in terms of curriculum development and whole school staff training, and has also meant that pupils in some classes have had a number of teachers throughout the course of an academic year. While every effort is made to keep disruption to a minimum, this is bound to impact on pupil's standards and progress. The headteacher and governors now need to give urgent attention to ensuring that temporary appointments are made permanent and to devising ways of attracting and retaining suitably experienced and qualified teachers.

60. As a result of the high number of temporary and newly qualified teachers, other teachers have become responsible for co-ordinating more than the usual number of subjects. The school is now in a position to make permanent appointments and to re-allocate responsibilities. This should enable co-ordinators for subjects other than mathematics, English and science to begin or continue with the important work of developing the curriculum and resources for their subjects. The co-ordinators will also need more non-contact time than is currently provided to enable them to complete the task and some, who will be managing subjects for the first time, will need support and training. The leadership and management of the work in special educational needs is good. Links with parents are being improved and structures are being created where weaknesses are identified and can be addressed. For example, further improvements are to be made to the quality of individual educational plans.

61. There are sufficient support staff in post to assist with the teaching and learning and a number are very experienced. Support assistants work closely under the guidance and supervision of teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator when planning work and supporting pupils. They provide good support for pupils; are patient and encouraging, and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

62. Teachers new to the school are provided with appropriate support and good information about school policy and procedures, and there is a good and very comprehensive teaching and learning policy. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is good. Arrangements for staff training are satisfactory and are supported by the good links with other schools. Training has been closely linked to curriculum development priorities. Recent emphasis has been on teaching of literacy and numeracy, pupil management and multicultural awareness. The effectiveness of this training is clearly evident in the quality of the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the consistently good pupil management evident throughout the school. High turnover of teaching staff means that some previous training priorities will need to be revisited; that for information technology, for example. Appraisal arrangements have been similarly affected by staff changes, although some are due to be held later in the current term.

63. The school's accommodation is very good. The building is light, bright, very well maintained and there is plenty of space to enable all subjects of the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school building is kept extremely clean by the caretaker and cleaning staff. There are plenty of spaces outside of classrooms for support staff to take small groups or listen to readers. There is a very spacious hall, and a good library which is comfortably furnished to encourage browsing, but sadly is underused. The playground area is large with

plenty of hard and grassed areas which are very well suited for all play and physical education activities. One shortfall in the accommodation is the lack of a separate outdoor play space for the under fives. However, a room inside the building is designated for creative activities and the use of large equipment. A separate fenced off area for children under the age of five is planned in the current school development plan. This project is to be funded jointly from the school budget and from funds raised by parents.

64. Resources throughout the school are generally sufficient to deliver the curriculum. Priority has therefore been given to resourcing the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Reasons for the foundation subjects, religious education and information technology need to be extended. There are very good resources for the teaching of physical education, and the reception classes are well resourced. Books available reflect different cultural backgrounds.

65. The money available to the school has been limited in the past few years due to two overriding factors. The previous administration overspent and this money has had to be repaid. Secondly, long term staff absences and vacancies have been filled and are currently filled, by temporary agency staff. The cost to the school is significantly higher than is covered by the insurance premium, and the shortfall has to be met from existing funds. The school has cleared previous debts incurred. The current budget shows a deficit, only because pupil numbers have recently increased significantly, requiring the school to set up two additional classes and to employ additional teachers. This apparent shortfall will be recouped from the Local Education Authority at the end of the financial year. Staff and resources are effectively deployed and the school makes good use of the accommodation.

66. There are effective systems in place to ensure that principles of best value are applied. The school makes good use of the available money and of the grants it receives for specific purposes, including funds provided for staff training, for additional resources to support work in literacy and numeracy, and for pupils with an additional language and with special educational needs. The school has yet to take advantage of the opportunity to bid for the Department for Employment and Education's funding in relation to information technology.

67. The office staff are conscientious and efficient, ensuring a good standard of day-to-day administration and control of the school's budget. The work of administrative staff supports the work of the headteacher, and class teachers, and they provide a useful contact point for both pupils and parents. The most recent auditor's report identified a number of areas for attention. Many of these relate to the difficulties experienced by the school in relation to the initial set up and implementation of local education authority's new and updated financial and computerised systems. These are now set up and operational and past data is being placed into the system. In view of the need to use the Internet, the school should install a second telephone line to ensure that access is available to both the Internet and telephone at the same time.

68. Pupils enter the school with overall attainment levels, which are well below average. They make at least sound progress in most subjects, and a picture of good rates of progress in some subjects is emerging. There is good provision for the children under the age of five and for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well and develop good attitudes to learning. The cost per pupil is slightly above average. When consideration is given to all of these factors, the school provides at least satisfactory value for money. This is an improvement since the last inspection when value for money was judged unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

69. In order to raise standards further the headteacher and governors should:

- Give urgent attention to employing a permanent teaching staff and to finding ways of attracting and retaining staff in the future.
(Paragraphs: 21, 59,60, 62,65,107,137,146,156)

- Improve the provision for information technology by providing staff training, extending the resources, and completing the scheme of work for the subject.
(Paragraphs: 7, 30, 62, 64, 142, 142, 144, 146)

- Extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills further by:
 - * giving more attention to the teaching of research and library skills throughout the school, and to monitoring pupils' individual reading at Key Stage 2;
(Paragraphs: 8, 92, 97)

 - * placing more emphasis on data handling and problem solving in mathematics, and, taking advantage of opportunities to develop and apply pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the range of subjects, when reviewing schemes of work for subjects in the light of Curriculum 2000.
(Paragraphs: 22, 26, 28, 95, 110, 113, 139, 161)

Most of these issues have already been identified by the school as priority areas for development and are contained in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12	42	44	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

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	292
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	77

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	89

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	70
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	28	22	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	16	12	18
	Girls	18	12	16
	Total	34	24	34
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	68 (51)	48 (62)	68(56)
	National	82 (80)	83(86)	87(89)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	17
	Girls	18	16	18
	Total	36	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	72(59)	68(64)	70(91)
	National	82(81)	86(85)	87(86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	10	15	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	9
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	19	18	22
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	76([62)	72(29)	88(47)
	National	70(65)	69(59)	78(69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	8	7	8
	Girls	13	11	12
	Total	21	18	20
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	84(62)	72(41)	80(47)
	National	68(65)	69(65)	75(72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Average class size	23

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	175

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	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	453346.00
Total expenditure	461406.00
Expenditure per pupil	1803.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3940.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-11942.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	292
Number of questionnaires returned	60

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	39	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	42	56	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	62	7	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	48	27	5	3
The teaching is good.	45	50	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	43	25	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	30	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	42	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	39	56	5	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	43	8	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	48	24	3	10

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

70. In most Kent schools, children start at the beginning of the term in which they will be five. The headteacher and governors for the past four years have decided to offer all the under fives a full year in the reception classes, with attendance on a part time basis in the first term. In this current academic year, all have been offered a full time place from September, the additional cost being borne from the school's existing budget. These developments have been very effective in raising standards. This year for the first time, pupil's overall attainment in English, mathematics and science by age seven is much closer to that attained by pupils of a similar age. Additionally, inspection evidence shows pupils in reception and Year 1 attaining better standards than past results at age seven have indicated.

71. The attainment of most children on entry to the reception classes is below the level expected for children of this age in many areas of learning, and is well below average in language skills and development. Pupils' social development, however, is average. Children make good progress towards achieving the Desirable Learning Outcomes identified as targets for children of this age. By the age of five, children's attainment is above average in personal and social development. In physical development, children's attainment is broadly average. In language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, attainment remains below average.

72. In personal and social development, children's progress is good and the standards they achieve are above those expected for their age. Children develop confidence as they undertake a variety of activities throughout lessons. They confidently leave their parents and carers and prepare for the school day. Children talk confidently to staff and visitors and explain what they are doing. They are keen to show what they have learnt. Most children behave well and respond suitably to staff's directions and requests. They are familiar with school routines. For example, when they come to school, children hang their coats on their own pegs and sit on the carpet to wait for their lessons to begin. They line up sensibly before moving to different parts of the building. Staff expectations are clear and this helps children to understand the difference between right and wrong in relation to school routines and behaviour.

73. Children play together in a friendly way during self-chosen activities or during teacher directed work. They learn to work in-group situations for increasing periods of time during literacy and numeracy work. Children persevere at tasks in activities they choose themselves. For instance, two boys pretending to work in 'The Office' played for over twenty minutes, answering telephone calls, using a computer and taking notes, which they pinned on a notice board. Children learn to take their turn and to share equipment. Groups of children playing in 'The Pizza Parlour' organised a rota for themselves so that they all took turns at being the cook and customer. They independently undress and dress themselves when changing for physical activities and they put away equipment at the end of lessons.

74. Teachers give good attention to pupils' personal and social development, with suitable emphasis in their planning and in the way they deal with children during the course of the day. Staff working with under-fives are good role models for children and provide a caring and secure environment. They explain tasks and rules carefully, making sure children understand what to do, and they have high expectations of children's behaviour. They plan many group activities and encourage children to share equipment with each other. Staff give children the opportunity to take responsibility and to be independent. For example, they encourage children to take the registers to the school office and to tidy away equipment themselves.

75. In language and literacy, children make good progress. Children learn to listen in small group situations and in circle time, for example. They learn to follow instructions well. Work is planned to target specific vocabulary. This helps children to increase their understanding of new words and improves their knowledge of vocabulary, which is weak when they begin at school. For instance, teachers talk about words connected with the weather and days of the week. While some children express themselves clearly, others are not able to talk about pictures they are shown by the teacher because they do not know the correct words to describe the scene. Children are interested in books when read by teachers and handle books carefully themselves. They complete sentences when teachers read books with which they are familiar, and repeat stories such as *We're going on a bear hunt* with expression and appropriate actions. Children learn to recognise words and letters in simple reading books. They make simple sentences with the teacher and read them back, and recognise words that rhyme. Children recognise their own names and all can make their name using magnetic letter shapes. Some children write their name on the computer with adult help. They know the sounds and names of some letters and use letter cards to build up simple words such as *sit* and *sat*. Children practise making marks leading to handwriting in their role-play, and some of the more able children know sufficient letters to copy words from the board. They recognise some of the letters from their own name in other words. Most children are not yet able to write many letters accurately but do try to write their names.

76. The teaching of language and literacy is at least good and often very good. Staff give great emphasis in their planning to language development as a key area of learning. They plan activities such as circle time to help children improve their vocabulary and speak in small group situations. Staff ensure that children pay attention and improve their listening skills. They read to children regularly and present good models, so that children recite stories using expression correctly to make the stories more interesting to the listener. Teachers introduce elements of the literacy hour to improve children's literacy skills and prepare them for work in Key Stage 1. They work closely with children in-group work, encouraging them into discussion through asking challenging questions. Parents are encouraged to help with children's learning by helping them to learn words and practise reading. Staff provide a language-rich environment and fill all available time with activities which are aimed at improving children's language skills.

77. Children make good progress in mathematics, although standards are still below those expected for children by the time they are five. Children learn to sort objects according to length and learn the words *longer* and *shorter*. Using the computer, children match the names of numbers to the numerals. They recognise numbers at the bottom of pages and

count to five. They count in twos and reinforce their number skills by reciting suitable nursery rhymes. They count objects in a picture of a toyshop in sets of 15 and some children recognise the number fifteen when it is written down. Children thread beads onto to a lace in sets up to 15. Most children recognise the four common shapes, square, rectangle, triangle and circle and use them to make repeating patterns. They experiment with filling containers of various sizes with water and are learning to sequence the days of the week.

78. The teaching of mathematics is good. Staff provide good opportunities for children to develop mathematical concepts and to develop and reinforce mathematical language and ideas, including the use of computer programs and opportunities to investigate capacity and weight by using the sand and water play.

79. In developing their knowledge and understanding of the world, children make good progress, although the standards they achieve are below those expected for children by the age of five. Children discuss life in families and develop a sense of themselves and others and their own place in the family unit. Through the use of simple books, they learn about different types of family. Play in the home corner gives them an understanding of everyday experiences such as cooking, eating out and serving others. They learn about different types of houses and compare bungalows, detached and semi-detached houses. They make simple plans of houses, gardens and car parks in the sand tray. They learn about the types of jobs people do, such as the work of a clown in the circus; in 'The Office' and Pizza Parlour,' they answer the telephone and take messages. Children broaden their understanding of weather through studying the weather each day, and learn about the seasons in nursery rhymes. Through play activities, they gain knowledge of different materials. Children use technology to support their learning, using a mouse to control and point to objects on the computer screen and listening to tapes in the listening centre. They broaden their knowledge of the world through using CD ROMs such as *My Amazing World Explorer*.

80. The teaching of knowledge and understanding is good. Staff provide opportunities in activities so that children develop scientific and environmental curiosity. They provide stimulating displays that encourage children to look closely at pictures to develop their powers of observation. Although there is no secure outside play area where children can take part in larger group role-play or imaginative play, the school does make use of its activity room which contains a good range of large play equipment. The area outside the classroom has the potential to be used to enable children to plant and to watch things grow.

81. In physical development, children make good progress and achieve standards that are broadly in line with children of similar age. They move safely about the hall, matching their movements to instructions from the teacher and avoiding other children. They work on ladders, benches and other large apparatus confidently. Children ride on wheeled toys in the indoor play area. Their control of small objects is good. They hold pencils and crayons correctly and most colour in spaces accurately, keeping within the lines. Children thread beads on laces without difficulty during mathematics activities. They accurately pour sand and water through funnels and sieves and fill containers. Children manipulate mouldable materials carefully to an even thickness and cut out shapes accurately. When changing for physical education lessons, they fold their clothes and pile them neatly on their tables. Children change shoes without adult help when they come to school and leave in the evening. They build models using construction kits and control the mouse accurately to move objects around the computer screen.

82. The teaching of physical development is very good. Staff make good use of the hall to allow children to exercise vigorously and gain confidence in using large apparatus safely. They give clear instructions. Staff support children very well in their tasks, making good use of other adults to help children succeed. They provide many opportunities for children to learn to use small equipment such as crayons accurately, and encourage children when they build with construction toys.

83. Children make good progress in creative development although the standards they reach are below those expected for children by the age of five. They listen to music such as *Peter and the Wolf* and some say what the music sounds like. For instance, one girl noted that the music sounded like a bird flying fast. In activity time, children were not seen using musical instruments; they did not choose to play with them, although they are readily available. They print repeating patterns using potatoes, choosing two colours. When drawing figures, children show a wide range of ability in their representations of people. Some are completed with all limbs, fingers and facial features present, but other shapes are not recognisable as people. Children know the names of most colours and many produce neat and careful coloured pictures. They use a paint program on the computer to produce drawings of pizzas they would like to eat. They use mouldable materials to create the shapes of houses and car parks. Children make three-dimensional models using construction kits and act out games using their models. Their imagination is well developed through role-play, for example when pretending to make and serve pizzas and manning an office.

84. The teaching of creative development is good. Staff encourage children in their creativity and display their efforts. They provide a good variety of materials and tools that are put out to provide easy access. Staff encourage children to express their ideas and communicate feelings through role-play and art.

ENGLISH

85. 84. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 2, or the higher Level 3, in reading was well below the national average. In writing, the percentage reaching the expected level was very low, and the proportion reaching the higher level was well below the national average.

86. When compared with similar schools, pupils' overall performance in reading tests was well below average and very low in writing. Since 1996, the school's results in reading have been rather erratic. They fell in 1997 and 1998 but rose significantly in 1999. Overall results in writing have fallen since 1996. Girls outperform boys in both reading and writing tests, although the differences are not greater than those found nationally.

87. In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 or higher was close to the national average, and the percentage reaching the higher Level 5 was below it. When compared to pupils from similar schools, the percentage reaching Level 4 and above was well above the average, although the percentage reaching the higher Level 5 was broadly average. Over the last four years since 1996, the school has achieved greater improvements than the national trend. By the age of eleven, girls perform better than boys in National Curriculum tests, to a degree consistent with results nationally.

88. Inspection findings show that, although overall attainment by age seven is below average, the current Year 2 class are attaining better standards than pupils of the same age in previous years. Given the low attainment levels of many pupils on entry to school, this represents good progress during their time at the school. By the age of eleven, inspection findings are that most pupils are working in line with national averages. This also shows good progress overall throughout the key stage. The school has made steady improvements overall since the last inspection and good progress has been made in reading and writing by the age of eleven.

89. By the age of seven, a majority of pupils have made steady progress with their speaking and listening skills, and the attainment of these pupils matches the expected level for their age. However, a significant minority have poor speaking and listening skills. Most pupils listen carefully during the literacy hour, take part in discussions and answer questions willingly. However, in a lesson when the class were discussing the story, *This is the bear and the scary night*, about half the class could not repeat the story after the teacher had revised the content during the introduction of the lesson. The higher attaining pupils talk about books they have read, but lower attaining pupils find it difficult to describe characters and events in the books. Some pupils do not have a firm understanding of combinations of letters such as *pl* and consequently cannot read out words such as *play*.

90. By the age of 11, most pupils speak with confidence to adults and other pupils. Some pupils in Key Stage 2, however, have limited vocabulary and therefore need extra support in understanding what is being said. In a lower attaining Year 3 group, for example, some pupils did not know the meaning of the word *stepmother* and could not recall stories such as *Hansel and Gretel* or *Cinderella* which have stepmothers in them. Some average attaining pupils in the same age group find it difficult to repeat facts or information they have just been told. However, the higher attaining pupils do comprehend well. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils take part in discussions willingly, but some still find difficulty in understanding the teachers' instructions sufficiently to be able to carry out tasks set for them.

91. Attainment in reading is improving in Key Stage 1 but is still below average. Pupils at Key Stage 1 enjoy reading. When asked to describe books they particularly enjoy, more able and average attaining pupils often name books they have at home, for example, books of the Disney cartoons such as *The Lion King*. These pupils explain the main points of the stories they read; one pupil, for example, gave a clear description of the character of the nasty uncle in the *Biff and Kipper* stories. Lower attaining pupils describe their favourite parts of stories, but are not able to talk about the characters apart from naming them. Pupils use picture clues and letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words. By the age of seven, average and higher attaining pupils read confidently and with expression, but other pupils are more hesitant. Some pupils do not take account of punctuation when reading and they lose the sense of the story because of this lack of basic skills.

92. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 2 so that, by the end of Year 6, the attainment of most pupils is appropriate for their age. Higher attaining pupils read with expression and are confident readers. Higher and average attaining pupils enjoy reading and several are members of the local library, although lower attaining pupils are less keen to read. Pupils read a range of literature including Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl and the Harry Potter stories. Higher attaining pupils read quite difficult and thought-provoking books such as *Goodnight, Mr Tom* and *The Diary of Ann Frank*, and one pupil has just started reading *Captain Correlli's Mandolin*. When choosing books from the school library, some pupils choose

books that are too difficult and they do not always receive sufficient help from teachers to guide them in their choices. Pupils know what contents and index pages are used for, and higher and average ability pupils are familiar with the purpose of the glossary. They choose books by reading the synopsis, or *blurb*, on the back of the books. Pupils borrow books from the library to use for research in the classroom, but none of the pupils spoken to in Year 6 had a good understanding of how to use the library classification system. The reading diaries in Key Stage 2 are mostly completed by pupils, and those in Years 5 and 6 do not contain comments about pupils' progress by parents or teachers. This does not allow for a useful exchange of information between home and school about the way pupils progress and is in contrast to the good practice established in Key Stage 1.

93. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their writing skills, although by the end of Year 2 the overall attainment levels are below average. Pupils write about the weather in winter and re-tell fairy stories such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. More able pupils, who are on course to achieve the expected level of attainment, write in sentences that are correctly punctuated with full stops and capital letters. All pupils are beginning to identify speech in their writing and more able pupils attempt to use the correct punctuation. Their spelling is accurate, and within sentences, the verb and subject usually agree. Pupils use conjunctions to extend their sentences and make them more interesting. Higher attaining pupils use adjectives to enrich description, but other pupils write in a simple style that lacks imagination. The handwriting of average and higher attaining pupils is generally correctly formed, but too few pupils join their writing confidently and this prevents them achieving the higher Level 3.

94. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in writing and more achieve standards that are in line with national averages. They construct sentences that are grammatically correct and try to enliven their work by using interesting words. Pupils separate their writing into paragraphs and use common forms of punctuation accurately. All pupils include speech in their writing, and average and more able pupils punctuate speech accurately. Pupils write in a variety of styles including imaginative stories, letters to newspapers and recipes. Good poetry is a feature of displays in the entrance hall. Some of the poetry shows great thought and is sensitively written, for instance poems about the role of a mother in the life of a child and a reflection on the life of a grandfather. By the age of eleven, handwriting is usually fluent, joined and legible, and some pupils are developing a mature style.

95. The overall quality of teaching is good. In the twelve lessons seen, teaching in one in three lessons is sound, in one in four is very good and in five out of twelve is good. Teachers give good attention to the literacy hour, but pupils do not do enough writing in other subjects such as religious education, history and geography. However, some teachers do link English with other subjects. An example of this was seen in work from design and technology in a Year 3 and 4 class, where pupils described how to make a rabbit with moving legs after studying *The Rabbit Who Stole the Fire*. Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and teach the basics of grammar well. They provide pupils with a wide range of writing

experiences, including reports, stories, poetry, instructions and letters. They make great efforts to combat the poor knowledge of vocabulary shown by pupils by providing a stimulating and language-rich environment in which displays are attractive and emphasise the words that pupils might use in their writing. There is also currently a growing awareness of the need to develop subject specific vocabulary in other areas of the curriculum; in mathematics and science for example. However, this is not yet applied across the full range of subjects.

96. Teachers make good use of local poetry competitions to teach pupils to write poetry that is descriptive and sensitive in several different styles. They place emphasis in their planning on teaching pupils to write extended pieces of work and make very good use of drafting books in which pupils try out their ideas. The quality of marking is very good; comments celebrate pupils' efforts and indicate what is good and how the writing might be improved. Some teachers also set small, easily achievable targets that help pupils to improve their work. Teachers manage pupils well so that there is usually a good working atmosphere and pupils produce a good amount of work. They explain learning objectives so that pupils know what they will be learning. Although teachers do give clear instructions which many pupils understand, they give insufficient attention to ensuring that all pupils have understood and show too little awareness that some pupils' poor vocabulary poses difficulties for them.

97. Teachers at Key Stage 1 give pupils guidance about what books they should read, but at Key Stage 2, some pupils need more guidance than they are given. Teachers usually leave pupils to choose books by themselves and some pupils choose books which are too difficult. As teachers of older pupils seldom hear pupils read individually, they are not as aware as they ought to be of the progress of pupils in independent reading. There is insufficient teaching of library and research skills. Pupils know how to use the index and content pages to find information, and some use the glossary, but few pupils at the age of eleven can use the library classification system with confidence to find books for research. Insufficient use is made of computers for research and to produce work using a word processing program. Much of this needs to be planned through the wider curriculum.

98. Teachers' use of homework to extend the work carried out during lessons is satisfactory. Pupils take home books to read to parents. A homework club has been set up which allows pupils to extend work done in lessons.

99. The subject is managed well by the co-ordinator, who gives good support to her colleagues. She has conducted an audit of the subject and identified areas for development, such as making improvements to work in the literacy hour. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and has monitored teaching. The school has developed a comprehensive programme for monitoring pupils' performance. The results of National Curriculum tests and other standardised tests are analysed to identify areas of learning that need improving and to place pupils in Key Stage 2 in sets so that their needs can be met more efficiently. Focused groups of pupils in each class in Key Stage 1, and in each set in Key Stage 2, are monitored closely to check on standards achieved and are given additional support on specific programmes such as phonological awareness. The governing body is kept well informed of developments in English and the governor with responsibility for English meets frequently with the co-ordinator, observes teaching and talks to parents. Resources to teach the subject are satisfactory, but there is only one reading scheme in use and this limits the choice of books for pupils. Reading records show how pupils progress through the scheme but provide little space for analysis of how well pupils are reading and what they need to do to improve.

100. The school has put a great deal of time and effort into raising standards in English. Observations of lessons and listening to pupils read indicate that these efforts are having a positive effect.

English as an additional language

101. The number of pupils currently in need of additional support is very small, but more pupils are expected to join the school in the near future. The pupils are making good progress in acquiring competency in reading and writing as well as in speaking and listening. There is a good focus on vocabulary, and opportunities for listening to models of good language are satisfactory. The specific support for pupils' language development is effective and addresses the four strands of language development contributing to the pupils' good progress.

102. The quality of teaching is good overall. Knowledge and understanding of the area of support are good, and the methods and strategies applied are effective in moving the pupils forward. The lessons are very well planned and match closely to the needs of the pupil. The support is delivered at a good pace.

103. The pupils observed are highly motivated and work very productively. Increasing familiarity with the new environment and the rapid rate of language acquisition make a good contribution to the pupil's self-confidence. There is no evidence of hostility or oppressive behaviour displayed towards the pupils.

104. The funds made available to the school are being used for their intended purpose and provide good value for money.

MATHEMATICS

105. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy and has worked hard to improve pupils' overall standards by age eleven. Recent results in the tests of last year's Year 6 pupils show good improvements in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level since 1996; in 1999, 72 per cent of pupils attained the expected level, whereas in 1996, the figure was only 20 per cent.

106. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999 at age seven, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level is well below the national average and very low when compared to similar schools. At age 11, the proportion attaining the expected Level 4 or above was close to the national average, and above average when compared with similar schools. Considerable changes in staffing. Low attainment on entry and low expectations in the past have played a major part in the poor results at Key Stage 1. There have been good improvements to the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level by age eleven during the past four years.

107. At Key Stage 2, staff changes over time, together with the a larger group of pupils with special educational needs, suggest that, at the end of this year, the percentage attaining the national expectation will be lower than for the previous Year 6 class. While average and higher attaining pupils will attain Levels 4 and 5, there will not be sufficient numbers of these pupils to achieve a position in line with national averages.

108. Against this backdrop of staff changes and an increasing number of special needs pupils, the school has worked hard to find ways of supporting pupils and of improving teaching and learning. The school has introduced 'setting' for pupils in Key Stage 2. It has recently extended this by introduced an element which involved the special needs co-ordinator in the mathematics teaching, so that she might help a small group of pupils to work at appropriate tasks for their age and understanding. Whilst it is too early to expect proof of success, evidence of the work seen in the inspection suggests that this pattern of work is likely to achieve its aims. The school has also introduced the National Numeracy Strategy earlier than it needed to, in order to support the teaching of numeracy throughout the school. This has been carried out well and there is now a good deal of uniformity about the teaching of mathematics, which helps to raise standards further and improve pupils' progress. The school has recently appointed a mathematics co-ordinator. Although she has only recently moved to the post, she already has a well-considered action plan for the subject.

109. During the inspection, pupils were seen making good progress in lessons at Key Stages 1 and 2, being able to remember and understand new ideas and put their new skills into practice. Over longer periods of time, as noted in the scrutiny of previously completed work, progress is not as good, as a number of pupils have difficulties recalling some of their previously learned material. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is variable. Where pupils with higher levels of need receive close support, they make good progress. Because of the wide range of ability still remaining within the mathematics sets, the lower attaining pupils receive no special help and struggle to make progress.

110. Pupils do not always make enough progress in using and applying their mathematical understanding to problem solving. Whilst some of the pupils have access to investigations in their lessons, this is not a regular enough activity and some of them are too directed by teachers. Most teachers use the first part of their numeracy lessons well to create opportunities for pupils to explain their reasoning during recall sessions. Some of the higher achieving pupils are gaining skills in selecting the appropriate mathematical method for solving problems, while younger pupils are being given opportunities to recognise patterns and relationships in numbers. Overall, however, this whole area of mathematics is not consistently planned or adequately distributed throughout the classes or the curriculum.

111. Work in number, at both key stages, is showing signs of good improvement. Pupils are beginning to make good use of their numeracy skills in making mental calculations. Children in reception can not only count to ten and beyond, but can also sequence numbers and note odd and even patterns. By Year 2 pupils can count past 50, count in at least 2's, 5's and 10's, understand how to double and halve numbers, and add three numbers together using a grouping technique. At Year 6, pupils are seen working in thousands and beyond. They have good control of simple fractions and can convert 'vulgar' fractions into 'mixed' fractions. They use decimals in simple addition and subtraction, with the higher attaining pupils working at multiplying decimals, while working sometimes to two and three places of decimals.

112. In their work on space shape and measure, pupils are again showing good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know and can name squares, triangles, rectangles and circles. They have sound experiences of measuring centimetres and grams in practical work and are able to estimate reasonably before checking their answers. By Year 6, pupils have built on their knowledge of shape and can describe isosceles, equilateral and scalene triangles. They can calculate the perimeter of compound shapes, with some pupils able to use co-ordinates in order to translate shapes plotted on a graph.

113. Progress in data handling is weaker and is not well supported by work in information technology and insufficient attention given to developing pupil's skills in this aspect of mathematics. Not enough evidence is seen in books or in displays to show pupils collecting, displaying and interpreting data. There is also little evidence of past work, on probability, in which pupils can discuss events and simple experiments in terms such as 'likely, probable or certain'. The school has clearly focused a good deal of its work on numeracy, and has been deflected away from data handling. Whilst this is understandable, it has not made enough use of other subjects such as geography or science to support pupils' learning in this type of work.

114. Pupils are able to apply their numeracy skills satisfactorily across the curriculum, although there is still more the school could do in linking information technology, science, design technology and geography with elements of numeracy. Every class has a display for their numeracy work. These vary in quality, but many are good and support well the work in numeracy. There are good displays of pupils' work in shape, while graphs are well used in Year 2 in a healthy eating display. Further good graphical displays are seen in a Year 3 and 4 class where the pupils have scored their favourite characters from 'How the rabbit stole the fire'. Investigations of the work of Fibonacci and of number patterns in the classes of the oldest pupils give good support to their learning.

115. In all but two lessons, pupils show good attitudes to their work in mathematics. They enjoy their work and are happy to share equipment and ideas with their friends in a sensible way. They settle quickly to their tasks and are already secure in the routines of the numeracy hour. All this has a positive effect on their learning.

116. Of the 12 lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching in one lesson was very good; teaching in over half of lessons was good, and in a quarter it was satisfactory. In one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. A significant feature of all lessons is the way in which the planning gives clear details of the learning objectives, helping the teachers to focus on their key teaching points. Equally important is the good control and management of the pupils. This means that little time is wasted in bringing pupils to order, more time is therefore spent on teaching and learning. The good quality of the teaching means that progress made in most lessons is good. In the best lesson, the teacher explained the learning objectives clearly and had very good subject knowledge. Before embarking on the work of the lesson she was at great pains to remind pupils of their previous learning. Questions were used very well to probe what pupils knew and could remember. The teacher used three support adults very well and the remainder worked at tasks which were matched to their age and abilities. The last part of the lesson was used well to summarise the important learning points and to consolidate targets. As a result, the pupils made good progress in their learning. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the temporary teacher experienced difficulty managing the class.

117. The school is developing a good use of targets for its pupils. Pupils know their targets well and are encouraged to discuss and understand them. The school also has good systems for assessing the progress of its pupils in mathematics. It uses these assessments well to organise the sets for the subject. The school's use of information technology in all aspects of work in mathematics is weak.

SCIENCE

118. Key Stage 2 results in the National Curriculum test following the last inspection, when only fourteen per cent of all pupils attained the expected level, were well below the national average. Good progress has been made since that time, with 88 per cent of pupils attaining or exceeding the expected level in 1999.

119. The 1999 results of the National Curriculum teacher assessments show that the standards attained by the seven year olds are both well below the national average and those achieved by pupils from similar backgrounds.

120. The 1999 results of the National Curriculum tests show that the overall standards attained by the 11 year olds were in line with the national average. Whilst the percentage attaining Level 4 and above is above the national average, the proportion attaining Level 5 is below it. These results are above average when compared with schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds and mark a very significant rise in standards from what they were in 1998 and 1997, when they were well below their respective national averages. The performance of boys for the years 1996 to 1999, taken together, was very low when compared with the national average. The performance of girls for the same period was well below their national average representing a difference between the attainment of boys and girls. However, no significant differences in boys' and girls' attainments were identified during inspection.

121. The current standards in science at the end of both key stages are broadly average. By the age of seven, the majority of pupils can construct a simple circuit. The more able pupils know that the circuit is faulty if the components are not connected, for example wires not touching the correct part of the bulb. They are aware of some of the differences between plants and animals, and of the important visible differences between the main groups of vertebrate animals such as reptiles, fish, birds and mammals. By the age of 11, the pupils have average levels of skills knowledge and understanding across all areas of the science curriculum. They are very well aware of the significance of fair testing when they make different comparisons. Pupils take measurements and use simple instruments correctly. They can separate substances from mixtures using sieves, and from other mixtures which require processes of dissolving, filtering and evaporating, for example, salt and sand or rice and salt. They use simple keys to identify animals such as worms, snails, ants and dogs. They know how to increase or decrease the intensity of light of a bulb.

122. Pupils are interested in science and show good attitudes to learning. They are well motivated; engage in lesson activities productively, and show good concentration during discussions and practical activities. The higher attainers make good contributions to class discussions and teachers' questioning. The relationships between boys and girls and teachers and other adults are good. Pupils are aware of their responsibility in lessons and consequently behave very well. They support each other's learning when working in-group activities.

123. The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is satisfactory in each of the key stages and is good in two out of five lessons seen. No unsatisfactory teaching and learning was observed in any key stage. Teachers have secure knowledge of science, which they use effectively to impart clear explanations of new concepts and ideas, for example, the relationship between exercise and the heartbeat. They make good use of questioning to link and consolidate previous work with the new learning. High expectations of work and behaviour are also positive features which contribute to raising standards. The tasks and instructions are explained clearly to ensure that pupils understand these and subsequently work productively. The management of pupils is effective. The teachers, however, do not sufficiently use opportunities in experimental and investigative science to develop pupils' subject knowledge and understanding by focusing on patterns and explanations. Teachers also too often focus questions on the more able pupils and do not check how far the lower attainers have understood. Boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs are offered the same opportunities, especially in relation to practical work.

124. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils apply themselves to learning intellectually in discussions and physically in practical activities. Productive working produces good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and boys and girls respond equally well in the learning processes.

125. The use of science books as reading material in the literacy hour for example, and the focus on developing pupils' scientific vocabulary make a good contribution to the pupils' developing literacy skills. The subjects' contribution to mathematics is satisfactory, although there is much scope to extend this. The use of information technology in science is under-developed.

ART and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

126. The last inspection found that the standards in art and design and technology were in line with the national expectations and that pupils made satisfactory progress. These standards have been maintained.

127. During the current inspection, only three lessons were observed: two in art and one in design and technology. All were in Key Stage 1. Additional evidence was therefore gathered from analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning. The pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress in both subjects.

128. In art, pupils in Key Stage 1 develop good skills in sketching. They understand form and proportions, for example when making observational drawings of a human face. In Year 1, pupils learn sound printing skills using blocks and produce patterns showing awareness of

space and colour and pattern. The pupils in Key Stage 2 study the work of artists such as Henri Matisse and make compositions in his style. In design and technology pupils have opportunities to make and design products including baking during food technology. This also develops sound skills in measuring, mixing and evaluating the quality of a baked product such as gingerbread.

129. Pupils show good interest in both subjects. They are well motivated and show good levels of concentration. They share materials and are helpful to each other and behaviour is good.

130. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen, teachers have secure subject knowledge and apply this effectively to advance pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and to provide worthwhile experience which contribute to pupils' sound learning. The subjects are satisfactorily led, although neither subject has been the focus for development in the recent past. Monitoring of teaching is not yet developed as an effective tool for enhancing pupils' experiences of art and design and technology.

131. The subjects make sound contribution to pupils' numeracy skills, as seen for example in measuring and weighing when making bread. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the overall contribution of design and technology to pupils' literacy and information technology skills.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

132. Since the last inspection there have been some improvements to work in both subjects, most importantly in the quality of teaching, which is now satisfactory. Because of the school's emphasis on core subjects of literacy and numeracy, only minor improvements have been made to work in either subject.

133. Evidence from work scrutiny and lessons seen shows pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in both subjects. Pupils make sound progress in their knowledge and understanding of geography. For example, in Year 1 pupils learn about simple plans of a house. They draw their own simple maps of their journey to school, noting the places they pass. They are introduced to maps of The British Isles. In Year 2, as part of a study of the Katy Morag stories, pupils begin to make comparisons between life in Ashford and that on a small island farming community. This knowledge is extended in Years 3 and 4 when pupils, as part of their topic on places, compare Ashford with a nearby village and learn about features of different types of settlement. When tracing their journey from Ashford to Aldington, pupils are introduced to map symbols used to represent different roads systems and learn about features such as footpaths and bridlepaths. Their knowledge is extended when they learn to locate more distant places on a world map and make comparisons about climatic conditions, for example those found in the in the desert, rainforest and Polar Regions.

134. By the time they are in the Year 5 and 6 classes, pupils know that different types of map can be used to provide different types of information, and most can interpret the symbols used on an Ordnance Survey map. They learn that the types of houses and buildings found

in a locality can tell us something about the history of the area, as well as about the current activities and employment opportunities.

135. The work covered each year is designed to build progressively on that learned previously. Some problems arise, however, at Key Stage 2. The school has recently adopted the authorised interim guidelines for geography and teachers sometimes make assumptions that pupils have already a firm understanding of the work recommended for study in previous years. However, this is not always the case and pupils experience some difficulty in lessons. An example was seen when pupils in Years 5 and 6 had insufficient prior knowledge of locations to apply to work on comparing Ashford with a more distant locality.

136. In history, progress is sound at both key stages. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sense of time passing and of the sequencing of events from stories about events in the past. For example, pupils in Year 1 learn about how bathrooms have changed over the years and draw time lines of their toys. In Year 2, pupils are introduced to events in the past such as The Great fire of London. They learn how we know about these events through the survival of evidence such as Samuel Pepys' diaries.

137. At Key Stage 2, pupils study past civilisations such as The Tudors, Ancient Greeks and Egyptians. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are able to research information for themselves in order to produce their own projects on topics such as the development of steam trains.

138. The teaching of history or geography was seen in four lessons in Key Stage 2, and one history lesson was observed in Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, teaching was satisfactory in all four lessons seen. In the lesson at Key Stage 1, the teaching was good. In Key Stage 2, strengths of teaching are teachers' good subject knowledge and clear learning intentions. Pupils are managed well. A weakness in almost all lessons at Key Stage 2 is the insufficient use of ongoing assessment during the lesson. Teachers spend too little time ascertaining that the majority of pupils understand the sometimes complex concepts and tasks presented to them before proceeding with the lesson. Teachers in such instances are sometimes content that the answer they required has been given to them, without sufficiently checking that all the pupils understand. Teachers' high expectations of pupils is a positive feature of teaching. However, they need to know when embarking on new topics, what pupils' prior learning experiences have been. Lack of detailed curriculum guidelines, the turnover of staff, and staff absence in the past mean there are gaps in some pupils' learning. These contribute to the difficulties which some teachers experience in matching work to pupils' prior attainment levels. As a result pupils' progress, although satisfactory overall, is impeded.

139. Teaching in the history lesson in Year 1 is good because the teacher knows pupils well and effectively develops and builds on pupils' developing understanding throughout the lesson. Resources and children's own experiences and interest are used effectively to extend pupils' understanding, and there is much reinforcement of new learning throughout the lesson,

140. There are missed opportunities for history and geography to contribute to the development of pupils' literacy development. Apart from project work in Year 6 classes, there are few examples of pupils writing freely about their learning in either subject, or of developing research skills through these subjects. Too much of recorded work is teacher directed and some of it is unnecessarily time consuming. This occasionally detracts from

learning, so the emphasis is on recording work rather than learning new skills, knowledge and understanding. Additionally, in Key Stage 2, the teaching could be better adapted to take account of some pupils' low literacy skills, especially those of some lower attaining pupils and those on the special educational need register. For example, more use could be made of visual materials, including selected video materials and schools' television programmes. Both subjects make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, opportunities to extend this contribution are missed.

141. In lessons seen, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are always at least satisfactory and, in three out of five lessons, they are good. Most pupils concentrate and try hard, even when work is difficult. When given opportunities to collaborate and work as part of a group, they do this well, as was seen when pupils at Key Stage 2 worked together to find information from maps. While keen to answer questions when they are fairly certain of the answer, a number of pupils otherwise lack confidence to volunteer.

142. The co-ordination of both subjects has recently been taken over by a member of staff. The co-ordinator has clear ideas for developing work in both subjects. However, she will need to be given some time out of class to develop the curriculum and resources for both subjects. Resources are adequate for history. In geography there are insufficient original maps for pupils to use and teachers have to use their own contacts and make resources for the new topics as they teach them.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

143. Since the last inspection pupils' skills in word processing have improved and standards in collecting and entering data on the computer have been maintained. Standards have not improved in programming the computer to control models or in sensing and interpreting features such as temperature, light and sound.

144. At Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is close to national expectations. They enter writing on the screen and space their work correctly after using full stops. Pupils correct mistakes using the delete key and use the shift key to type capital letters. They create pictures using a paint program, choosing shapes, colours and painting effects from the features built into the program. Pupils have not yet had experience entering commands to control a programmable toy and do not know how to save and retrieve their work.

145. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are in line with national expectations in handling text and data. Standards are unsatisfactory in the use of control technology and in sensing and interpreting physical features such as temperature. Pupils can start and end programs from the computer. They save and print their work. Pupils change font style, size and colour by making choices from a list shown on a menu and many pupils use the icons as a short cut for these operations. They move text by cutting and pasting it to a new position, and make their work more interesting by importing pictures into the text. Pupils learn how to put a border round their work and can vary the thickness and colour of the lines. They collect and enter details, such as the number of pets owned by pupils in the class, onto lists and produce charts and graphs to illustrate their results. In mathematics lessons, pupils chart the

relationship between parts of their bodies, such as hand spans and the length of their feet. Few instances were seen where pupils use information technology to support other subjects. However, in Years 3 and 4, pupils collect information from CD ROMs in their study of the Tudors. The school has insufficient equipment to enable pupils to practise control technology and measure temperature, sound and light; furthermore, it does not make full use of the equipment that it does have. For example, the Roamer programmable toy is underused, as is the control box to operate lights and motors.

146. No information technology lessons were seen during the inspection. However, there is evidence from work on display to indicate that the teaching of word processing skills at both key stages is sound, and that the teaching of data handling skills is sound by the age of eleven. However, computers were seldom seen in use during the inspection and teachers do not use information technology sufficiently in lessons to support other subjects and broaden pupils' experiences. Sometimes teachers type out text while pupils watch. While this ensures that a larger amount of work is copied onto the computer, it does not encourage pupils to improve their own computing skills.

147. Because important parts of the curriculum in control technology and the sensing of physical features such as temperature are not undertaken adequately, the school is not meeting all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Information technology is a priority area for development in the school development plan. Following criticisms in the previous inspection report, the school leased new computers and printers for every class. Training was also provided for teachers. Unfortunately, the majority of the teachers who were trained have since left the school and further training is now required to give current teachers more confidence in teaching information technology. Teachers' lesson plans do not include provision for information technology in other subjects. Due to the staff changes, there has been no co-ordinator for information technology for some time and this has meant that monitoring and support for teachers and pupils have not been satisfactory. However, a new co-ordinator will shortly take responsibility for the subject. He has already carried out an audit of equipment and begun to review the school policy. In conjunction with the headteacher, he is establishing a clear view of what is needed to improve resources and training for information technology. All Key Stage 2 classrooms have been provided with connection to the Internet. The headteacher and co-ordinator recognise the need to improve provision for information technology and are committed to making improvements. The school is in a sound position to make progress in this subject.

MUSIC

148. In Key Stage 1, only two lessons, in Year 1 was seen. Pupils' work in these lessons, and in the one lesson seen in Key Stage 2, and the quality of pupils recorder playing in assemblies, indicate that standards have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory.

149. By the age of seven, pupils can use sounds to create a musical effect. They learn to use their hands and feet and make sounds with their mouths to imitate the sounds of creaking doors, fluttering bats and skeletons to add sounds to poems and stories. They develop their ability to imitate sounds by combining instruments with other sounds when studying the poem, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. Pupils add to their knowledge of the musical instruments they have previously used by experimenting with new instruments. However,

they find it difficult to copy rhythms played by the teacher. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1. Pupils continue to make steady progress in Key Stage 2. They learn to make sounds of differing qualities using instruments in order to represent the mood of the music, and make suggestions to vary the sounds of the instruments to resemble falling rain, hail and gushing water.

150. The quality of teaching in two out of the three lessons seen was good, and satisfactory in the remaining lesson. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use the correct musical vocabulary. Particularly at Key Stage 2, they teach in a lively manner and use their imagination to illustrate points they want to teach in their lessons. For instance, in a lesson in Key Stage 2, the teacher poured water from varying heights to illustrate the different sounds produced. They establish good relationships with pupils by using humour and praise to encourage them. Teachers advance pupils' learning by presenting them with challenging tasks. They have high expectations of the way pupils behave. In lessons near the end of the day, when pupils sometimes become tired and restless, teachers use good strategies to keep pupils working well. For instance, in a lesson in Year 1, the teacher passed a tambourine round a circle of pupils, expecting them not to make a sound as the instrument was passed from hand to hand. Pupils do not always make the progress that the quality of teaching deserves. In Year 6, the lessons are too short for much progress to be made during the lesson. Because of the shortness of lessons, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop the quality of the sounds that pupils make when using instruments. The good teaching in clubs out of normal school hours is evident from the quality of recorder playing to accompany assemblies.

151. In addition to music taught in lessons, the school provides good opportunities for pupils to sing in a school choir and to learn to play the recorder. Pupils listen to a variety of music in assemblies, including classical music, folk music from Ireland and music from African countries. They take part in concerts for parents at Easter and Christmas, and sing for outside audiences. The resources for music are satisfactory but there are insufficient instruments, such as African drums, for music from other cultures to be studied. The co-ordinator does not have time allocated to monitor teaching or pupils' work, and has not been in charge of the subject long enough to raise standards. However, she has revised the school policy, re-written the guidance for teachers and carried out an audit of resources, identifying areas where more resources need providing. She has a clear view of how standards can be improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

152. Improvements have been made to work in physical education since the last inspection, especially in the areas of swimming and adventurous activities. These were both noted as being absent from the school's programme of work at that time. The curriculum for physical education is now well balanced and covers all elements identified in the National Curriculum. Although only gymnastics and dance were seen, other aspects of the work were noted in plans and discussed with teachers.

153. Standards are as expected for primary age pupils. Pupils of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress in the lessons observed, with some pupils making good progress in lessons where teaching is of a higher standard. This was noted particularly in a dance lesson in a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils. In this lesson the pupils were building a dance sequence

around the theme of volcanoes. They showed good control of their group movements, expressed clear feelings and moods and reacted well to the changing music. In a Year 2 gymnastics lesson, the pupils showed sound progress in planning and performing basic skills of taking weight on different parts of their bodies. In the better lesson, pupils showed progress in beginning to make comments about their own progress and that of others. Sometimes not enough attention is given to help pupils use the vocabulary of movement, so that they might learn to use such terms as 'sequence, dismount, pathway and expression' freely in their own comments.

154. Teaching, in the lessons observed, was never less than satisfactory, with teaching in two out of the five lessons being very good. All lessons were well planned and the subject knowledge of the teacher in the dance lesson was very good. This allowed her to interact well with the pupils, ask a good range of questions and provide rather more feedback and supportive comments than was given in the other lessons.

155. The school's accommodation for indoor physical education lessons is good; for outdoor activities it is very good. The school makes good use of the accommodation, but problems with the use of the hall for dinners do mean that some lessons in the afternoon are late starting or are disrupted. The school makes good use of a local swimming pool and of the staff there. The re-introduction of swimming is fairly recent for the school, as a result, the school is not yet able to ensure that all of its pupils can fully attain the goal of swimming twenty-five metres before they leave the school.

156. The subject is enthusiastically co-ordinated by a teacher, who, like several others, gives time freely in order to take after school sporting activities. This gives many pupils the opportunity to improve their skills and to take part in 'friendly' competitions and tournaments. In this way, the subject makes a good contribution to the social and moral development of the pupils in both class and club activities. In lessons, pupils work well in groups, sharing apparatus and waiting their turn. The very youngest pupils are noted helping each other, with great care, when moving across apparatus.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

157. Improvement since the last inspection has been impeded by many staff changes and the loss of the previous co-ordinator. Although teachers refer to the locally agreed syllabus, there is no detailed scheme of work which can provide support for teachers. The new subject co-ordinator is aware of this and plans to revise and extend the scheme of work to make it both more supportive of teachers, and also more continuously in tune with what pupils already know, so that they might progress smoothly in gaining knowledge about religions and from religions.

158. Pupils understand that their life is a journey with particular important episodes in it. They recognise that some places are sacred to different groups of people. Older pupils in Key Stage 1 can understand the links between themselves and the journey through life of Jesus. They can relate to the important milestones in his life. Work in Years 3 and 4 develops more progressively, with pupils looking at rules in their games. They then extend

this to cover rules in their families and in their school. They finally look at rules in the Christian, Jewish and Sikh faiths to find their similarities and differences. They have studied the interior and exterior of their local church and have studied such celebrations as Christmas, Easter and the Id-ul-fitur. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of different religions, but their understanding is a little jumbled owing to the way the teaching has been structured.

159. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in their understanding during lessons, but because the topics chosen by the school do not fit together in any continuous way, their learning and understanding over time are not as good as they could be. Examples noted in the samples of work seen show that in one term, younger pupils discuss birthdays, helping each other, families, and Mary and Joseph's escape from Herod. It is difficult to see the links between these topics and therefore difficult to see how pupils can build up their knowledge and understanding in a step by step way.

160. Some good work was noted in the books of pupils in Key Stage 2, in which pupils were making good progress. Here, pupils were writing about rules and how they affect their lives. This was then compared with the rules noted in different religions. Equally well completed was work in Year 3 and 4 on comparing baptism with the Sikh naming ceremony. Later the festival of Advent is compared with Hanukkah, with pupils being able to remember such words as Torah, synagogue and Chanukah. Once again the well-structured work in these instances assists the pupils to make better progress.

161. Pupils respond well to their work in religious education. From the work seen and the lessons observed, pupils enjoy listening to stories from the sacred books and present their work well.

162. In those lessons, teaching was satisfactory. Although too few lessons in religious education lessons were observed during the inspection to make a judgement about the quality of teaching overall, teachers' plans and pupils' work provide some additional evidence. The individual plans made by some teachers are good but not every teacher had planned for their work in the subject. On too many occasions, the written aspect of the lesson takes the form of the teacher writing text on the board so that pupils can fill in gaps with selected words. Whilst this may ensure that all pupils take part, it does not extend the learning of the potentially higher attaining pupils. Furthermore, links with aspects of literacy are not regularly made. For example, little evidence was seen of pupils writing for different purposes. There are missed opportunities for pupils to write in the first person, as a bystander in Bethlehem for example, or of creating a guidebook for the local church studied. It is in such ways that pupils' literacy skills can be extended and improved through links with other subjects.

163. The newly appointed co-ordinator is concerned about some of the above issues, but has not yet had sufficient time to tackle the problems. She has already discovered that the school has good written resources, but lacks some artefacts which would make the subject more interesting and exciting for pupils. She has already successfully suggested a more thematic approach to acts of worship. This results in themes being explored in the various assemblies over a period of time, allowing both teachers and pupils to explore the themes in some detail. In this way, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are being satisfactorily developed within both religious education and collective worship.