

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ALPHEGE CE INFANT SCHOOL

Whitstable

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118659

Headteacher: Mrs S Evans

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Skinner
23160

Dates of inspection: 26th-29th March 2001

Inspection number: 194852

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Oxford Street Whitstable Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, St Alphege CE Infant School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Hoare
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

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9588	Tony West	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12918	Brian Farley	Team inspector	Mathematics, art, geography, physical education, equal opportunities.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22745	Rosalind Johns	Team inspector	English, history, music, religious education, special educational needs, English as an additional language.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Alphege CE Infant School educates boys and girls aged between four and seven years. There are 242 pupils on roll altogether, of whom 122 are boys and 120 are girls. This is larger than the average for infant schools. After a rise in numbers in 1998, the roll is now lower than at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. Eighty-seven children are taught in three classes in the Foundation Stage, all of whom were attending school full-time during the inspection. There are 93 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, which is well above the national average. Three pupils have statements of special educational need. A significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs have speech or communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has risen from 22 per cent at the time of the last inspection to its current level of 38 per cent. About four per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and three pupils are learning English as an additional language. This is a bit higher than in most schools. Two pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Around 24 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. During the last school year, 20 pupils joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission and 14 left it other than at the normal time of leaving or transfer for most pupils. This is a broadly average rate of mobility. Pupils enter the school at below average levels of attainment. This has declined significantly since the last inspection, when it was judged to be average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Standards are improving, although this is not yet reflected in the pupils' results in national tests. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and helps pupils to make sound progress, but it is not able to compensate fully for the low starting point of many pupils by the time they leave the school. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and gives children a good start to their education.
- The very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development promotes the positive attitudes, good behaviour and very good relationships that exist throughout the school.
- The school offers a rich and varied curriculum for all its pupils, which makes very good use of the local area and links with the community.
- The school has very good procedures for ensuring the pupils' welfare and demonstrates high levels of care and concern for pupils and their families, which helps pupils to be secure and confident learners.
- The good quality provision for pupils with special educational needs helps them to reach good standards relative to their previous attainment.
- The school's good relationships with parents greatly assist the progress that pupils make.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, particularly in speaking, listening and writing, which are well below those expected for their age, and standards in mathematics and science, which are also lower than the national average.
- The pupils' attendance, which is well below the national average.
- The school improvement plan, which only covers one year and does not focus sufficiently on raising standards of attainment.
- The role of the governing body in monitoring the school's performance and holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides and the standards achieved by the pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June, 1997, and since then it has made a satisfactory improvement. Since the previous inspection, the school has suffered considerable upheaval and disruption as it has moved twice, first into temporary accommodation while the new building was under construction, and then into the new building in September, 1999. This, together with a focus on improving pupils' behaviour, has detracted from efforts to raise standards, which have remained low since 1997. Most of the key issues for action from the school's last inspection have been addressed well. For example, the quality of teaching has improved considerably, as a result of good quality monitoring and development. The quality of curricular planning is higher and this now shows clearly how learning will progress from year to year. The management of pupils' behaviour is now a strength of the school, and there is no disruptive behaviour. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Issues related to assessment and the school improvement plan have not been fully addressed. Now that staff and pupils are settled in their new environment, there is a spirit of optimism and determination to raise standards. The school has a good capacity to improve in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
reading	D	E	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
writing	E	E	E*	E*	
mathematics	E	C	E	E	

Standards have remained consistently low in reading, writing and mathematics, except in 1999 when those in mathematics reached average levels. In 2000, the school's results in writing were in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. The poor results in 2000 reflect the ability of the year group, which contained over 40 per cent of pupils with significant special educational needs, many of whom also had behavioural difficulties. This year group also experienced disruption during their progress through the school as they moved into different buildings each year. However, another factor in the low standards is that many pupils enter the school with poor speaking and listening skills, which affect the progress they make, especially in writing, and the school is not doing enough to compensate for this. The findings of the inspection show some improvement in standards in reading and mathematics, which are now below average. Standards in speaking, listening and writing remain well below average. Standards in literacy and numeracy reflect those in reading, writing and mathematics. In art, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education, standards are average. Standards in science are below average in Year 2. This is partly because not enough time is given to the subject, and partly because more able pupils do not receive sufficiently challenging work. In history, standards are below average because pupils' knowledge and understanding are hindered by weak literacy skills. The targets that have been set for pupils to achieve in the 2001 tests represent an appropriate degree of challenge given the ability of the year group. Overall, pupils make sound progress and their achievement is satisfactory, although

more able pupils do not always reach the standards of which they are capable and boys achieve less well than girls. There is evidence of improving standards in Year 1.

Children in the Foundation Stage enter school with below average attainment. Many have very weak skills in speaking, listening and writing. They make good progress and are on course to achieve average standards by the end of the Reception year in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. Despite good teaching, standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematics are still below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are interested and involved and are keen to work in lessons. They are receptive to the teaching, although many lack the confidence to express their ideas.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and on school visits. This has a positive impact on the quality of their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and show care and concern for others. They form very good relationships with each other and with adults.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is well below the national average. This has an adverse effect on the progress made by some pupils. A significant minority of pupils arrive late in the morning, which causes disruption in some classes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

During the inspection, 98 per cent of the teaching was at least satisfactory; 49 per cent was good and nine per cent was very good. Two per cent of the lessons were unsatisfactory. Consistently good teaching was seen in the Foundation Stage, where 77 per cent of the lessons were good. The quality of teaching in English, including literacy, is satisfactory. In mathematics, including numeracy, it is good. Strengths of the teaching throughout the school are the relationships that teachers develop with pupils and the good management of pupils in lessons. These help pupils to form positive attitudes towards learning and to concentrate well in lessons. Also, teachers' planning is of good quality and shows clearly what pupils are expected to learn. Teachers plan work well to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities, including pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. In mathematics, the teaching of pupils in ability groups is having a positive influence on their rate of progress. The strongest feature of the pupils' learning is their interest in

lessons and their concentration. They are keen to try and work things out for themselves, and work well independently, with a partner and in a group.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. The school offers a rich variety of learning opportunities, which capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers make very good use of the local area to enhance pupils' learning. The National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a good effect on standards in mathematics. The National Literacy Strategy has not yet been tailored sufficiently to the school's needs in order to raise standards in writing. The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of more able pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The teachers, assistants and co-ordinator for special educational needs work well together to provide good support for pupils in lessons and in small groups. Pupils have challenging but achievable targets, which are reviewed regularly.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils make good progress in developing fluency in English as a result of well-structured, dynamic specialist teaching and effective liaison with class teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. All aspects are promoted very well through the planned curriculum and assemblies. They are enhanced by a variety of visits and visitors to the school and through discussions in 'circle time' in each class.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. It has very good health and safety and child protection procedures. Teachers know pupils well and take great care to ensure their welfare. Assessment procedures are good in English and mathematics, but are underdeveloped in other subjects. They are very good in the Foundation Stage. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour.

The school works well with parents, who have positive views of the school, and this supports the pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and is well supported by other staff with management responsibilities. Some co-ordinators are fully involved in monitoring the quality of the curriculum and the progress made by the pupils, but not all are fully effective in this role. There is a strong team spirit amongst staff, which ensures that the school's aims and values are implemented well. The school improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on raising standards of attainment.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Although most of the governors are fairly new to the role, they have made a good start in finding out about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are aware that raising standards must be a priority. They have much expertise to offer and are already becoming involved in identifying priorities for improvement, monitoring finances and acting as critical friends to the school. However, their role in monitoring the school's performance is underdeveloped.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. In the past this has not been rigorous enough in determining the cause of low standards and finding ways to improve them. Recent innovations in target setting and tracking individual pupils' progress against expected norms are having a positive impact on raising teachers' expectations. Effective monitoring of the quality of teaching has led to significant improvement in teaching and learning since the previous inspection.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are used well to promote the pupils' progress and expenditure is linked carefully to the school improvement plan. The money that is allocated to the school for special educational needs is used well to provide a high number of learning support assistants, who provide good support for pupils. Administrative procedures are very efficient and the principles of best value are applied well. Information and communication technology is used very well for administrative purposes.

The school is very well staffed and the new accommodation is of a very high standard. These factors have a positive impact on the quality of the pupils' learning. The school has adequate resources to support the curriculum. There is a particularly good variety of books, and resources for English, special educational needs, physical education and the Foundation Stage are also good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. • The progress their children make. • The way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The quality of the teaching. • The behaviour of the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons.

The findings of the inspection largely agree with the positive views of the parents, except that not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable during their time in the school. The evidence of the inspection shows that the school offers a good range of extracurricular activities, which enhance the pupils' learning well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage at below average levels of attainment. The results of tests carried out in the children's first term in school show that they have particularly weak skills in speaking and listening and writing. The previous inspection found that the children's attainment on entry to the school was average. When the pupils who are now in Year 2 entered the school, their attainment was well below average, especially in communication, language and literacy. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good in the Foundation Stage and help pupils to make good progress in all areas of learning. As a result, by the end of the Reception year, pupils are on course to reach average standards in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. This is similar to the findings of the school's previous inspection. However, standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematics are below average by the end of the Reception year, which is lower than at the time of the previous inspection. This reflects the children's low starting point in these areas of learning. The very good emphasis on the children's personal, social and emotional development in the Reception classes helps them to settle quickly into the routines of the school and to develop confidence and independence. This also helps children to develop positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers are very aware of the need to compensate for many children's poor language skills, and place great emphasis on developing their ability to communicate with each other and with adults. By the end of the Reception year, children are able to express their thoughts and ideas simply, but most are not yet able to use language imaginatively, and their knowledge of sounds is below that expected for their age. Although children become more confident in recognising numbers and counting to ten or beyond, many are unable to use their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems. In physical development, children control and co-ordinate their bodies when balancing and climbing and, in creative development, they participate confidently in imaginative role-play and enjoy exploring different media and materials in art and design.

2. In the end of Key Stage 1 tests in 2000, when compared with schools nationally and with schools that have a similar percentage of free school meals, the pupils' results were well below average in reading and mathematics. In writing, they were in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. When compared with other schools within the Local Education Authority that have a similarly high percentage of pupils with special educational needs, the pupils' results were slightly lower than the average in reading and mathematics, and significantly lower in writing and spelling. Boys performed considerably worse than their counterparts in these schools, while girls did significantly better, except in spelling. In Year 2 in 2000, 64 per cent of the pupils were boys and over 40 per cent had significant levels of special educational need. Over 20 per cent of the pupils were identified as having behavioural problems. Attainment was also low among average and more able pupils. The previous inspection judged standards to be average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. However, the results of the national tests in the same year showed that standards were well below average. The proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected of seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics, showed some improvement between 1997 and 1999, especially in mathematics. However, a large number of pupils only just achieved the level, and few did so comfortably or well. Very few exceeded it. In science, the assessments made by teachers in 2000 were very low, being in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. There are significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls in national tests over the last five years. Overall, boys do less well than girls in the tests and the differences in their attainment have become more marked over time. The findings of the inspection show that boys' attainment is lower than that of girls in

English and mathematics. The school is aware of this and is beginning to implement strategies to address it.

3. The findings of this inspection show some improvement in standards in reading, mathematics and science, which are now below average, compared with the previous year's test results, and those achieved in 1997, which were well below average. In writing, standards are still well below average. The school is implementing some strategies that are successfully addressing underachievement in reading and mathematics, such as the reading club, the Reading Recovery programme, and teaching pupils in ability groups in mathematics. Although the introduction of an able writers' group is a good initiative that is having an impact on the attainment of more able pupils, the strategies used to teach writing and spelling are generally not having enough influence on pupils' learning. This is because many pupils have poor speaking and listening skills, and these are not being developed sufficiently to enable them to make good progress in other areas of the curriculum. This is reflected in history, where attainment is also below average. Pupils achieve the standards expected of seven year olds in art, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. It was not possible to see enough lessons to make a judgement about standards in music. Standards are lower than those reported by the previous inspection in science and history, while standards in design and technology and physical education have improved. Given the well below average attainment of the current Year 2 on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

4. In Year 2, pupils' listening and speaking skills are weak. They enjoy listening to stories, rhymes and poems but some, especially boys, soon lose concentration. Their weak listening skills are often masked by their good behaviour as they become passive. More able pupils express their ideas thoughtfully and use a growing vocabulary, but many pupils use a narrow range of vocabulary and pronounce words indistinctly. Pupils' limited vocabulary and lack of confidence prevent them from expressing their ideas clearly and audibly. Standards in reading are below average in Year 2. Pupils enjoy books and take them home regularly to practise their skills with their parents and carers. More able pupils use their phonic knowledge confidently to tackle relatively difficult words, and are developing independence. Average pupils read simple texts accurately and with understanding, using their developing knowledge of letter sounds to work out regular words. Less able pupils read simple and familiar words but they soon start to hesitate and require frequent support. Standards in writing are well below average in Year 2. Some pupils are able to communicate their ideas in different forms such as stories, notes, invitations, instructions, and rhymes. Their writing shows an awareness of sentence formation but they use a narrow range of vocabulary. Less able pupils use simple sentences and phrases, which often show a lack of coherence. More able pupils have an appropriate understanding of the structure of a story and are beginning to use interesting vocabulary and to extend their ideas imaginatively. Pupils' lack of good speaking skills restricts their ability to spell simple words accurately. Pupils rely on the use of phonics to spell more than simple, familiar words rather than a sound knowledge of spelling patterns. The handwriting of some pupils is consistently formed and clearly joined but many write with limited control over the use of letters. Pupils' use of punctuation is very variable and not all use capital letters and full stops in their writing.

5. In mathematics, pupils have a sound understanding of addition and subtraction facts to ten and use mental calculation strategies to solve number problems. They recognise sequences of numbers, including odd and even numbers and use the correct mathematical names for two-dimensional shapes. After gathering information, pupils record it in simple tables and construct bar charts to communicate the information more effectively. There is little evidence of higher than average attainment, and a significant proportion of pupils are on course to reach standards at the lower end of the average band. In science, pupils observe and compare objects and living things and make simple observations. Their use and understanding of scientific vocabulary are weak. They have a sound understanding of life

processes and living things and know that moving objects are affected by forces such as pushing and pulling. However, insufficient time is given to teaching science in Year 2 to enable teachers to cover all aspects of the curriculum in sufficient depth. In art, pupils have drawn timber-fronted houses. The quality of many of these drawings is good, showing that aspects of shading and proportion are well developed. Although teaching in art is generally satisfactory, expectations are not high enough for pupils to produce work of consistently good or high quality. In design and technology, pupils in Year 2 investigated different ways of joining materials, including sticky tape, staples and a glue gun. They decided which worked best and used this information to help them when designing and making Joseph's coat of many colours. In geography, pupils described some important features of an imaginary locality when making a journey with Barnaby Bear. Their written work indicates that teachers do not have very high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Because of this, pupils' geographical skills are not well developed. When using the computer, pupils in Year 2 are able to change the font, size and colour of text and combine text with pictures to present information. They use the mouse to 'drag' words across the screen and place them in alphabetical order. In physical education, pupils achieve sound standards in throwing and catching and responding to music through dance. Although pupils are asked to comment upon their performance or that of others in lessons, there are not enough opportunities to do this. In history, pupils have sound insight into the Great Fire of London and infamous fires in Whitstable and are suitably aware of the importance of historical sources such as books, the Internet, videos and museums to enable them to develop their skills as young researchers. Although there is sound coverage of topics, pupils' achievement in history is undermined by weaknesses in literacy skills.

6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. They are given work that is appropriate to their stage of learning and generally receive well-focused support in class and in withdrawal groups. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage, and targets on individual education plans are clear and specific and are reviewed and modified, as necessary, every term. They contain small steps in learning, which are achievable and allow pupils to experience success, so that they promote learning and confidence well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress compared with their earlier attainment because of the school's strong commitment towards them. All staff share the same philosophy and want to achieve their agreed aims and values.

7. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in learning English and achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. This is because they receive very good support from a specialist teacher, and are also supported well in the classroom.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Since the previous inspection, the pupils' attitudes to the school have improved and are now good. They are enthusiastic, take pride in their school, and have a positive attitude towards their work. This supports teaching and learning well. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are keen and involved in all school activities. Most pupils concentrate hard, follow instructions well and settle quickly to the tasks given, although in a few lessons, the concentration of some pupils, especially boys, was hindered by their poor listening skills. Pupils work well independently and in various group situations, sharing ideas and valuing each other's work. During a visit to the Canterbury Environmental Centre, pupils worked particularly well together, sharing equipment and marvelling at the discoveries they had made. They socialise together well at play and at lunchtime.

9. Children in the Foundation Stage quickly develop positive attitudes towards school and most are keen to take part in the activities provided for them. They soon become familiar with the teachers' expectations of their behaviour and most show a good understanding of right and wrong and act

accordingly. They form constructive relationships with each other and with adults, and understand the basic rules that underpin social harmony in the classroom, such as taking turns and sharing resources. The children show independence in taking care of themselves and grow in their awareness of the needs of others.

10. The pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is a calm and caring atmosphere throughout the school. All members of staff provide excellent role models for the pupils who, as a result, behave well, complying with school and class rules in all situations. They know right from wrong and are polite and courteous to all members of staff, other pupils and visitors. Pupils form orderly queues, wait their turn, open doors for others and show care in their support for those with special educational needs. At the time of the last inspection, there was some disruptive behaviour among older pupils. Staff have worked hard to establish consistently good behaviour management strategies, and are now reaping the benefits of these initiatives. There were no instances of poor or disruptive behaviour during the inspection. The great majority of pupils understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Resources are handled carefully, and no examples of damage or graffiti were seen during the inspection. On visits, pupils are frequently praised for their good behaviour.

11. The pupils enjoy very good relationships with each other and with adults. This, too, has improved since the last inspection. These very good relationships are reflected in all aspects of school life, and have a very positive effect on the pupils' learning. The pupils' personal development is good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. All pupils are able to join in a range of extracurricular activities, and their personal development is enriched by activities involving the Church and their local community. When given the chance to help others, they accept readily and enter into the tasks wholeheartedly, acting as monitors and raising money for national and local charities. In 'circle time', pupils listen to what others have to say and show consideration for others' feelings.

12. Attendance is unsatisfactory and this is having an adverse effect on some pupils' progress. The attendance of pupils of compulsory school age, recorded by the school in the 1999 to 2000 period, was well below the national average. Despite efforts to improve attendance over the past year, including careful recording and following up of absences, the school has been unsuccessful in reducing absences. During the inspection, a significant minority of children were late for school and this had a disruptive effect at the start of some lessons. For the majority, registration takes place promptly and efficiently, and those pupils in class at the start of sessions settle down to work with little fuss.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, although there is a degree of variation between different parts of the school, in that it is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory at Key Stage 1. This judgement is broadly the same as that made by the school's previous OFSTED inspection. However, in that inspection, approximately 25 per cent of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory, and 33 per cent were good. In this inspection, 53 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. The quality of teaching was very good in nine per cent of these lessons, good in 49 per cent, satisfactory in 40 per cent and unsatisfactory in two per cent. These figures represent a clear improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of learning closely reflects the figures and judgements for the quality of teaching.

14. A strong feature of the teaching throughout the school is the way teachers work together as a team. This is particularly effective within each year group, and leads to consistency of approach between the three classes. This shows good improvement since the previous inspection, when there was not enough consistency about teaching methods and standards between teachers. Teachers'

planning is also a strength. Lessons are carefully planned by the three teachers in each year group in the context of the overall plan for the term, and the purpose of each lesson is made clear, so that teachers and pupils all understand what is to be learned. This is an improvement since the last inspection when inadequate planning was one of the weaknesses identified. The management of pupils is also consistently good throughout the school, and this results in a calm but purposeful working environment, which helps pupils to concentrate and apply themselves to their work. This is a further improvement since the previous inspection, when ineffective management of behaviour led to disruption in some lessons. A strength of the pupils' learning is the interest they show in all activities and the way they apply themselves to their work. Pupils also demonstrate independence and are able and willing to take responsibility for their own learning when appropriate. At the time of the previous inspection, one of the weaknesses identified was low expectations and insufficient challenge in some lessons. Teachers are now working hard to address this, and, in most instances, have appropriate expectations of what the pupils can achieve. However, teachers' expectations are not always high enough in English, particularly in speaking, writing and spelling, and also sometimes in art and geography. Also, teachers do not consistently reinforce high expectations of the pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work, which results in low standards in these aspects.

15. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Foundation Stage is good in all areas of learning. It is particularly strong in personal, social and emotional development. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. During this inspection, 13 lessons were observed in the Reception classes. Ten lessons were good and three were satisfactory. The quality of the teaching promotes good progress, but is not able to compensate fully for the low starting point of many by the end of the Reception year, especially in communication, language, literacy and mathematics. A very good feature of the teaching is the effective teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants. All show a good knowledge and understanding of the foundation curriculum and the way children learn. They are particularly aware of the need to develop the children's language skills and take every opportunity to engage them in conversations, discussions and listening activities. Adults generally manage children well and have high expectations of their behaviour. However, teachers do not always consistently reinforce the rule about not calling out answers, and, as a result, some less confident pupils do not have enough opportunity to contribute. Teachers plan effectively for all six areas of learning, and set out clearly what pupils are to learn in each. They achieve a successful balance between activities that are directed by an adult and those initiated by the children, and there is a good emphasis on learning through carefully structured play activities. Teachers have introduced elements of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy appropriately, based on their good understanding of the children's needs and capabilities. They provide an interesting range of activities that involve listening, talking, reading and writing. During the inspection, there were many instances of adults sharing books with children, engaging them in conversations, participating in play activities alongside them, reading stories to them and giving them opportunities to write. For example, one group 'wrote' letters to Mum, another played a game of rhyming lotto, while some children listened to taped stories. Teachers use 'Big Books' effectively, both to stimulate children's interest and enjoyment in reading and to teach them about the conventions of language. For example, the youngest Reception class took turns to use the teacher's pointer and identify capital letters and full stops when reading *The Baby Who Got The Blame*. During 'circle time', when children take turns to share their thoughts and feelings, teachers encourage children to develop confidence in speaking aloud and to express themselves clearly.

16. All staff are watchful and make sure that the children take part in and experience all of the different activities. They establish very good relationships with the children, and help them to feel secure and confident in their learning. They encourage children to think for themselves and not to worry about failure when trying out new experiences. All adults interact well with children in their play activities, give them clear instructions and explanations, and ask challenging questions. For example, in a physical development lesson in the hall, the teacher explained very clearly what was

expected and asked pupils what they could remember from earlier lessons. This reinforced their learning and enabled them to concentrate on improving their ability to stretch and curl when moving around the apparatus. All staff and parent helpers are clear about the purpose of what they are doing and the needs of the children they are working with. The quality and use of ongoing assessment in the Foundation Stage is very good. Teachers and assistants make regular observations of individual children to assess how well they are participating in activities and how much they have learned. The assessments are carefully linked to each of the six areas of learning and show how well children are achieving. Each child has targets for each half term in all areas of learning. These are reviewed and records are kept to show how well the child has progressed. Teachers' records are detailed and informative and show that assessment information is used very well to plan work for each child that is sufficiently challenging and appropriate to the child's stage of learning.

17. At Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and pupils make steady progress. No clear judgement about the quality of teaching at this key stage was made by the previous inspection, though just under 20 per cent of the lessons seen in English, mathematics and science were unsatisfactory and just under half were good. During this inspection, 40 lessons were observed at Key Stage 1. The teaching was very good in five, good in 16, satisfactory in 18 and unsatisfactory in one. At this key stage, the quality of teaching and learning is good in mathematics, including numeracy, and physical education, and satisfactory in all other subjects, except music, where there was not enough evidence to make a judgement. The quality of teaching in literacy is satisfactory, but has some shortcomings, which are addressed more fully later in this report. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved in mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education. The school has ensured that teachers have had the opportunity to increase their expertise through in-service training in these subjects. Pupils in Year 2 have been organised into groups for mathematics, so that teaching can be more closely matched to their needs. This is beginning to have a positive effect upon their attainment.

18. A Year 2 numeracy lesson for the most able group demonstrated some of the best features of the teaching at this key stage. The session began with a lively 'mental challenge', in which the pupils tried to outdo the teacher in a timed exercise to find pairs of numbers that had a difference of two. This provided a very stimulating start to the lesson, which challenged pupils to think and record their answers quickly. They clearly enjoyed trying to 'beat the teacher' and more able pupils challenged themselves even further by thinking of larger numbers than 100. After this, the teacher made effective use of a 'Big Book' to illustrate and explain to the pupils the nature of the data collection activity that was to form the main part of the lesson. Pupils were immediately engaged in the activity because the teacher made it relevant to their own experience: "Who would prefer to stay in at playtime and who would like to be outside?" By involving pupils actively in moving from one side of the room to the other to register their choice, and then adding other variables - "What about in the summer when it's warm and sunny?" - she gradually developed their awareness of how to make sure they ask the right questions. Constant questioning challenged pupils to think for themselves: "How can you make sure that you have asked everyone and that you haven't included someone twice?" These and other probing questions made pupils think carefully about some of the potential pitfalls in collecting information. The teacher's high expectations of the pupils' behaviour, independent thinking and productive use of time were constantly reinforced. She placed great emphasis on mathematical vocabulary and thinking, and urged pupils to "look for patterns all the time in your planning and organisation" as they moved from group to group to gather information. This energetic, well-paced lesson created a real buzz of excitement among the pupils, who responded very positively throughout.

19. In those lessons that were satisfactory, rather than good, a number of different factors were involved. Some lessons lacked pace and vitality, and did not inspire the pupils to produce their best work. Where the pace of lessons is too leisurely, pupils begin to lose interest and their attention

wanes. By comparison, where the teaching is lively, imaginative in approach and energetic, pupils quickly become engrossed and actively involved in learning. On occasions, teachers have insufficient strategies to ensure that all pupils are involved in whole class teaching sessions, with the result that some pupils become passive observers rather than active learners. This is often masked by the pupils' good behaviour and apparent attentiveness, and some teachers are unaware that it is happening. Some teachers do not actively reinforce and extend pupils' language and build up their confidence as speakers sufficiently. They do not always seize opportunities enough in lessons to explore the richness of language and to develop in pupils an enjoyment of, and fascination with, words. The development of pupils' speaking and listening skills is not a high enough priority throughout the school, and this hinders their progress in writing and spelling and their success in some other areas of the curriculum.

20. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They receive good support from dedicated support staff whose work is generally well directed by teachers and efficiently managed by the coordinator for special educational needs. Support staff are not always deployed effectively at the beginning of whole class sessions although, at times, they record pupils' responses or assess progress effectively. Planning generally ensures that pupils with special educational needs have appropriate work, which is challenging but achievable. Class teachers and learning support assistants plan, and afterwards review, the lesson together carefully. As a result, pupils make good progress and develop positive attitudes to work. The co-ordinator for special educational needs acts as a good focal point for all staff to discuss appropriate strategies and concerns about individual pupils, including the more able. Some pupils are withdrawn from classes so that they can have appropriate help for speech and language difficulties. The quality of teaching for pupils with English as an additional language is very good when they are taught by the specialist teacher. The teacher uses a very good range of strategies to support pupils in learning English, both in the classroom as part of regular lessons, and by withdrawing the pupils for specialist tuition

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

21. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are very good and this is effective in promoting its aims. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught, the latter with clear reference to the locally agreed syllabus. The breadth and the relevance of the curriculum are good overall, but the time allocated to some subjects is below that which is recommended at Key Stage 1 and this is most significant in science and art. Swimming, not a compulsory subject at Key Stage 1, is taught to pupils during the summer term. Most of the schemes of work that have been introduced are based on those provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. However, the school has modified those for religious education and history to take advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the locality. Since the previous report, the school has made a number of improvements in curricular provision. These include curriculum and lesson planning, emphasis on health and physical fitness in physical education, and a good range of extracurricular activities. A particularly effective innovation is the use of computerised systems to plan and monitor the curriculum.

22. The school places appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented, but its effect on raising standards is unsatisfactory. This is mainly because there is insufficient focus on the development of pupils' language skills in order to enrich their vocabulary and their use of spoken and written English. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve in writing are too low because there is too little emphasis on rigour and high standards. These features adversely affect standards in some other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy is established and is beginning to have a satisfactory effect in raising standards. In

order to make better use of the Numeracy Strategy, pupils in Year 2 are now taught in groups of similar previous attainment. This means that teaching is much better matched to their needs.

23. Twenty-three per cent of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were not satisfied with the range of extracurricular activities provided by the school. The findings of this inspection are that, at different times of the year, the school offers a good range of activities. These include recorders, board games, French, computers, and a fun and fitness club. On two afternoons each week a reading club provides pupils with the opportunity to take part in reading and provides a good range of quality books for this activity. In addition, the school has established and maintained very good links with the local community that enrich the curriculum for all pupils. For example, pupils have worked with an artist and the local museum, they have sung carols to elderly residents and have been visited by members of the community who have shared their memories and experiences with the pupils. Local shopkeepers, tradespeople and companies in the town have supported the school very well. Pupils participate in a very good range of visits out of school and see many visitors in school, that enrich their experience of the world.

24. The aims and mission statement of the school show a commitment to equality of opportunity. The school is aware of the differences in attainment between boys and girls, but strategies to deal with this are not yet well developed. However, the school is now making good provision for more able pupils to develop their writing skills in special sessions and all pupils have personal targets.

25. Curricular provision for the high number of pupils with special educational needs is good. The needs of pupils with statements of special educational need are well met and their annual reviews provide a good focus for further improvement. Good provision is also made in small withdrawal groups, mainly for work on basic literacy skills or for individual pupils with a significant level of need as well as those with emotional or behavioural problems. Pupils' progress in reading is enhanced by the Reading Club and the Reading Recovery programme. In general, more able pupils are provided with an appropriate degree of challenge in their learning, for example, a Year 2 writers' group, ability groups in mathematics and extension work in class. They are given research activities that encourage good study skills and a challenging range of fiction. There is no specific policy for the identification of gifted and talented pupils.

26. The school provides good support for the three pupils with English as an additional language. They make good progress in developing fluency in English as a result of well-structured, dynamic specialist teaching and effective liaison with class teachers. They are all able to take a complete and successful part in every aspect of school life and to benefit fully from the education it provides.

27. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage are very good. The curriculum is well planned to take account of the recommended areas of learning for children in the Reception year and is geared towards achieving the national Early Learning Goals for children of this age. Each half term, planning is centred around a topic, which provides interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding within a meaningful framework. A very good example was the topic on 'Bears', which involved children in reading a well-chosen range of fiction and non-fiction texts, comparing the size of toy bears, using the computer to 'Dress Teddy', acting out the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, finding out where bears live, making a bear mask, using musical instruments to make sounds to go with a story, making porridge and drawing a map of Goldilocks' route to the bears' cottage. The topics are planned imaginatively and build effectively on pupils' earlier experiences.

28. The school has very strong relationships with pre-school institutions through the head teacher's chairmanship of their local group, and there is also close liaison with the local junior schools. The

transfer to Key Stage 2 works very well according to parents. Students from secondary schools and colleges, on work experience placements, and trainee nursery nurses are welcomed into the school. The school also offers teaching practice to students from Christ Church University College.

29. The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education. 'Circle time' provides many opportunities for teachers to discuss important moral and social issues with pupils and helps pupils to develop a sense of self-worth. Teachers value pupils' contributions and give them recognition for hard work and good behaviour, which also helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. In science and physical education lessons, pupils develop a sound understanding of how to keep their bodies fit and healthy and learn about the dangers associated with drugs from a visiting theatre group.

30. The school provides for pupils' spiritual development very well. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Assemblies are of high quality, with a strong spiritual element, and allow the children to reflect and to pray. There are opportunities at other times for pupils to reflect on their actions and to think about others. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to express awe and wonder, both in lessons and through visits and visitors into school. During the inspection, pupils visiting the Canterbury Environmental Centre were enthralled with the images of creatures on the video microscope screens. Later, back at school, they excitedly described what they had seen and experienced. Photographic evidence shows Reception children watching crabs in rock pools on the beach, responding to the sights and sounds around them as they walk along a busy street and observing the effects of the changing seasons. In a science lesson in Year 1, pupils were fascinated as they tried to predict how seed potatoes would grow into more potatoes. The school has very strong links with the local church and the pupils attend services there. During the inspection, pupils learned about Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, and expressed their feelings about what happened.

31. Provision for pupils' moral development has also improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The school has a very good behaviour policy in place and all members of staff ensure that it is implemented consistently. All provide very good role models for the pupils. Assembly themes and celebrations include moral messages, and deal with values, and 'circle time' is often devoted to discussing behaviour and the difference between right and wrong. For example, in Year 2, pupils discussed rules and the reasons for them. One said that the rule about not hurting others was difficult to keep to, another found it hard to be honest all the time. Such discussions help to reinforce the pupils' understanding of moral principles and develop independent thinking, and there are clear expectations of good behaviour throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to care for one another, which they do through the "Buddy" scheme. The library has a good stock of books that communicate moral messages.

32. Provision for social development is also very good and is strongly supported by the very good links established with the community and with parents. It was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and has improved very well. This is evident in the whole ethos of the school and in the very good relationships that exist. A wide range of visits and visitors enable the pupils to develop an understanding of themselves in a wider context. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to be adventurous in their learning and to work independently as well as in a variety of groups. Pupils willingly accept responsibility to help adults and their peers. They are encouraged to raise money for local and national charities and to be involved in local projects. Once a week, the whole school joins together for a special assembly when each class offers its charity collection. The money goes to sponsor a boy called Chimosola Zandu in Malawi. Citizenship is included in pupils' personal social and health education. Pupils develop social and environmental awareness through projects such as litter collection, recycling, gardening and planning their own play areas.

33. The school makes very good provision for the children's cultural development through its curricular provision, visits and visitors. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school has participated in projects with the Whitstable Contemporary Arts Group, pupils have enjoyed presentations by puppeteers and a local sculptor worked with pupils in Year 2 to produce an enormous clay hand. A musical ensemble called 'Suzafun' introduced pupils to an exciting range of brass instruments. Pupils have been involved in a project with a local artist and the Whitstable museum in celebrating a local custom, which involved gathering oyster shells and then building replicas of Whitstable "Grottas" for exhibition. Pupils visit places of cultural significance, such as Canterbury Cathedral and the Whitstable Oyster Museum. There are many opportunities in art and music for pupils to experience a wide range of cultures. For example, when learning about India and the Hindu religion, pupils experienced Indian music and dance, and drew Rangoli patterns on their hands, as well as dressing up in Indian clothes. This is illustrated very well on the school's website. Pupils also learned about the Chinese New Year and how it is celebrated. The school has a good range of musical instruments and artefacts from around the world and classroom and corridor displays reflect a variety of cultures. Careful choice of books for use in the classroom and for pupils to borrow from the school library ensures that pupils are presented with texts that reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of Britain. This is also reflected in the choice of dolls and other play equipment for the youngest children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school provides well for the welfare and support of the children in its care. The quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and comprehensive, members of staff know pupils and their medical and personal needs very well. External agencies, including speech therapists, other health professionals and social services, support this aspect of the school well. Members of staff care very well for any pupils who are unwell. There are responsible persons trained to administer first aid, and all members of staff have attended basic first aid training. First aid kits are distributed throughout the school. The school's policy and procedures follow the guidelines of the local committee for the protection of children. The head teacher is the designated person responsible for child protection and has attended training on the new provision. Other members of staff are familiar with the school's procedures. The school identifies and deals effectively with any hazards found on site, and health and safety inspections and risk assessments are regularly undertaken. There is a detailed health and safety policy and the school is a safe and secure environment.

35. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour have been formalised since the last inspection and are now very good, as staff consistently apply rewards and sanctions. Pupils are well aware of the school's 'Golden Rules', and parents and staff confirm that the arrangements work very well especially the use of 'Golden Time' as a reward system. At lunch and break times, any instances of poor behaviour are recorded and staff apply consistent strategies to deal with any poor behaviour and to diffuse any disagreements between pupils. The school is very good at monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour and is very aware of any groups of children who may be at risk. Parents confirm that the children feel safe in the school. Parents also confirm that there are few incidents of bullying or racism and members of the school staff deal with them speedily and sensitively.

36. The school has not been successful in improving pupils' attendance. There are appropriate systems in place to monitor patterns of absence and to follow up individual pupils. The school complies fully with statutory requirements for registration, coding and recording attendance, and the school secretary follows up well any unexplained absences and lateness. Despite these efforts, the school's attendance figures remain well below the national average. The school has made appropriate use of the educational welfare service although the link officer has not visited the school since October 2000.

Pupils who have been absent for lengthy periods are welcomed back to school sensitively by staff and pupils alike.

37. The procedures for monitoring and supporting the children's personal development are good. All members of staff have detailed knowledge of pupils' needs. Detailed records are kept of their physical and social development and the school has a good scheme for personal, social and health education. This scheme is also used to encourage children to be responsible for their own well-being and health and safety. 'Circle time' is used well and pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and to use their initiative. They are encouraged to care for others; for example, the "Buddy Stop", where pupils can wait in the playground and where they will be looked after by the appointed "Buddy".

38. Care and support for pupils with special educational needs are good. The school also has good procedures for assessing and recording their achievements. The well above average number of learning support assistants carry out the activities planned by teachers effectively and make careful records of pupils' progress. Targets in individual education plans are also sufficiently practical for class teachers to implement when support staff are not present. Termly reviews of pupils' achievements are carried out and provision is reassessed. Pupils who enter the school with special educational needs are incorporated into the programme efficiently. The school makes very good use of specialist external agencies, such as the school-based speech therapist, educational psychologist, educational welfare service and a visiting special educational needs adviser from the Learning Support Services. The whole school ethos is well reflected in the way that pupils with special educational needs have opportunities to take part in all school activities. Their contributions are valued highly and their achievements are recognised well.

39. Arrangements for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in the development of assessment procedures since the previous inspection. This is because, in English, mathematics and science, teachers keep very detailed records of what pupils can or cannot do. This practice is more consistent across the school than reported in the previous inspection. In the other subjects, assessment is less detailed, but it does help teachers to keep track of the progress of their pupils. In Key Stage 1, pupils have personal target cards, and this is beginning to help them to know what they must do to improve their work. The school has begun to carry out a detailed analysis of pupils' performance in the annual statutory tests so that it can identify, more exactly, what needs to be done to raise standards. In addition, the progress of individual pupils is now being closely tracked from the time that they enter the school. This is to ensure that teachers are fully aware of how well pupils do and what targets for improvement need to be set. These procedures are relatively recently established and do not yet have a significant effect on the way teachers plan the curriculum to meet the differing needs of pupils. Assessment procedures place a burden on teachers because most of the considerable evidence that they collect is handwritten.

40. The arrangements for children who are starting school in the Reception classes are very good. The school has very close links with local playgroups and teachers visit new children before they start school. They organise six introductory story time sessions for new children in the term before they start school at which the children are able to borrow a pack containing a book and associated toy, a game and an activity sheet, which they can change on their next visit. The school has put together over 100 of these packs, which help to prepare children well for taking home a reading book when they start school. In the first week of September, teachers spend time with each child's parents, building up a picture of the child's needs and capabilities, which provides a valuable starting point. Flexible arrangements for starting part-time or full-time help parents to accommodate their other commitments and ensure that the children can cope with the length of the school day. Assessment procedures for children in the Foundation Stage are very good. Teachers make regular observations

of each child and keep detailed records of their achievements in all six areas of learning. They use this information well to set targets for children and to ensure that they make good progress in their learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Parents and carers have positive views of the school, as the time of the previous inspection. The school works well in partnership with parents, who are made to feel welcome, and are able to discuss issues or any concerns that they might have. Parents are able to contribute to, and support the school in a variety of ways and they confirm that the school's 'open door' policy works well.

42. Throughout the inspection, parents expressed their satisfaction with the work done by the school. Information provided by the school for parents is good, and includes details of work that can be done at home, newsletters, day-to-day class and school matters and annual reports on pupils' progress. Information about the curriculum is made available, and parents have attended meetings about numeracy and literacy initiatives. The school's documentation for parents is informative and fulfils statutory requirements. A recent questionnaire was sent to parents and carers on the work that pupils do at home, and the responses were helpful and positive. Pupils' annual reports are very detailed: they describe what they have achieved and include information on how they can improve. Parents are also able to discuss their children's progress and view their work in the classrooms at a mid-point in the autumn and spring terms.

43. The impact of the parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. Through the Friends' Association, large sums of money have been raised for the purchase of books, and the association also organises social events. Parents and carers assist with extracurricular activities, and attend assemblies, performances, briefing meetings and parents' evenings. The school encourages parents to join in the work of the school and many were seen helping in school during the inspection, listening to pupils read and accompanying them on visits. Parents also help with sports activities during and after the school day.

44. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good. Parents are consulted when pupils are placed on the register of special educational needs. The co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures that parents receive regular information about their child's support and there are good opportunities for them to discuss any concerns. The outcomes of termly reviews are shared with parents and they are invited to contribute. Parents of pupils with statements are appropriately involved in annual reviews.

45. At the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection, parents of children in the Foundation Stage expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school's arrangements for helping their children to settle into school life. The school provides parents with comprehensive information about its routines and procedures, and liaises closely with them to ensure that they and their children receive good support. Teachers discuss children's needs and capabilities with parents when their children start school, and use this information to plan appropriate learning experiences for them. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's learning by sharing books with them and by helping in school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. This is essentially the same judgement as that of the school's previous inspection, which described the leadership of the headteacher as "sound". The headteacher provides clear direction for the school, and has identified

the need to raise standards of achievement as the school's main priority. The deputy headteacher, other year group leaders and the co-ordinator for special educational needs form a strong and supportive senior management team, who share the head's vision and are committed to raising standards and implementing the school's aims and values. There is a strong team spirit amongst the staff, all of whom feel well supported in their work and share the view that their main concern is to do their very best for all pupils.

47. Since the previous inspection, the school has suffered considerable upheaval and disruption. The previous inspection judged the accommodation to be poor and found that it had an adverse effect on the pupils' education. During the past four years, the school has moved twice, first into temporary accommodation while the new building was under construction, and then into the new building in September, 1999. The pupils who are now in Year 1 are the first intake to have been taught exclusively in the new buildings. Those now in Year 2 experienced their first year in temporary accommodation, and those who left the school in 2000 were taught in three different buildings. These upheavals caused further difficulties with the behaviour of some pupils, which continued to be a problem until very recently. Much time and energy have been spent on addressing behaviour management issues over the past few years, and this, together with the new buildings, is now having a positive impact on pupils' learning. There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs since the previous inspection. Four years ago, 22 per cent were on the school's register of special educational needs. This rose to its highest level of 46 per cent in 1999 and is now 38 per cent. The school offers a special facility for pupils with speech and language difficulties, and this has also taken time and effort to establish. As a result of all these factors, there has not been a sharp enough focus on raising standards, particularly for average and more able pupils, with clear targets for improvement. Consequently, standards have remained low. The proportion of pupils who achieved the standards expected of seven year olds in Year 2 increased significantly in mathematics between 1997 and 1999 and, to a lesser extent, in reading and writing. However, many of those pupils only just reached the level, and only a small proportion achieved it comfortably or well. Few pupils exceeded it. In 2000, the school's results declined again, compared to 1999. In 2000, 64 per cent of the pupils were boys, many of whom were underachieving, and over 40 per cent of the year group had significant learning or behavioural difficulties.

48. Now that staff and pupils are settled in their new environment, there is a spirit of optimism and determination to raise standards. Several useful strategies have already been put in place. In Year 2, pupils are now taught in four ability groups in mathematics, which allows teachers to provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils with special educational needs, and for average and more able pupils. This is already having a good impact on the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make in mathematics. The introduction of an after-school reading club, which involves pupils and their parents, has proved to be both popular and beneficial in boosting some pupils' attainment. An able writers' group, which takes place once a week in Year 2, is another effective strategy that is helping to raise standards for the most able pupils. New strategies for teaching phonics and spelling are being consolidated. One of the most important initiatives is the introduction of a system of tracking pupils' progress and setting targets for them to achieve, both in the short term and over a whole year. There are now clear expectations of the minimum progress a pupil can be expected to make each year. However, this system is in its first year of operation and has not yet had a noticeable impact on standards.

49. The key issues for action from the school's last inspection have been addressed well. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, as has the monitoring and development of teaching. Teachers' long term planning is much more coherent and consistent and shows clearly how learning will progress from year to year. Teachers' daily plans show explicitly the objectives for each lesson and how they will be met. The quality of teaching in physical education and design and technology has

improved and this has helped to raise standards in those subjects. The management of pupils' behaviour is now a strength of school, and there is no disruptive behaviour. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school now makes good provision for extracurricular activities and offers pupils a varied range of experiences and opportunities. Although there has been some improvement in assessment procedures, especially in English and mathematics, this has not been duplicated across all subjects.

50. The previous inspection also found that the school development plan attempted to deal with too many priorities in too short a time and was not evaluated to judge the success of the action taken. Although the number of priorities in the current plan is appropriate, and staff and governors review and evaluate the progress made during the year, the school improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on raising standards to be a useful tool in guiding future developments. It covers only one year and contains no measurable targets for governors to use when evaluating how successfully initiatives have been implemented. For example, although the plan recognises the need to address the differences between the performance of girls and boys, it does not indicate how this will be achieved or show how staff and governors will be able to measure the success of what they do. It does, however, indicate that research into local and national initiatives is to be carried out. In the past, governors have not been sufficiently involved in preparing the school improvement plan or in evaluating its success. The timing of the process has not been sufficiently rigorous to be effective in timetabling developments.

51. The monitoring of teaching and learning has played an important part in improving its quality. The headteacher, and the English and mathematics co-ordinators have all monitored the quality of teaching throughout the school and provided helpful feedback both to individual teachers and to the whole staff group, focusing on areas for improvement and aspects that are done well. The information gained from monitoring has not been used widely enough to affect teaching and raise standards sufficiently. Although other co-ordinators have not observed colleagues in the classroom, they monitor teachers' planning and year group teams monitor samples of pupils' work in different subjects. Co-ordinators know that they will be released from class to carry out observations and talk to pupils in other classes, but the timetable for this has not yet been put in place.

52. There has also been a considerable turnover of governors since the last inspection. For some time, governors, too, were pre-occupied with the buildings project and not sufficiently aware of the need to raise standards of achievement in the school. They worked very hard to bring about improvement in the school's accommodation, and, once this had been achieved, many left the governing body. Almost all of the governors have joined recently, the longest standing members having served for less than two years. The new governing body has worked hard in a short time to find out about its role and responsibilities, and to develop an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members are aware of the need to focus on raising standards of attainment, and those interviewed showed great enthusiasm for the undertaking. Governors are clearly aware of the role they must play in bringing about improvement and are already becoming effective in their role as critical friends to the school. They liaise with teachers, and are very supportive of the staff as a whole. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs has already become very involved in monitoring the school's provision for this aspect of its work. However, governors are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring the school's performance or holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides and the standards it achieves. Taking into account the renewed commitment of the headteacher, senior staff and governing body to improving standards and the good team spirit in the school, enhanced by the beneficial impact of the new buildings, the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

53. There has been a tendency in the past, when evaluating the school's performance, to focus too much on the explanations for low standards rather than the strategies needed to overcome them.

There is detailed analysis of the school's performance in national tests, compared with other schools both nationally and locally. Until recently, this has concentrated on contributory factors, such as high numbers of boys and high proportions of pupils with special educational needs, rather than on the evidence that shows underachievement by some average and more able pupils. Recent improvements in target setting for individual pupils and tracking their progress in English and mathematics have now set the tone for future improvement in this aspect. There is now a greater emphasis on what can be done to improve the situation than on attempting to justify it. The school has a number of good policies to promote the inclusion of all its pupils into the opportunities that it provides. However, although it has begun to analyse trends in attainment and monitor the performance of pupils, strategies to improve the differences in attainment between boys and girls are not yet well enough developed.

54. The school's resources are used well to promote the pupils' progress. Expenditure is carefully linked to the priorities in the school improvement plan, and good consideration is given to obtaining best value for money. For examples, governors are considering alternative maintenance contracts, which offer better value, and both parents and pupils were consulted recently about proposed changes to the playground. There is rigorous monitoring of expenditure from month to month by the experienced administrative staff, who work very effectively as a team. Administrative procedures are very efficient, provide very good support to the headteacher, staff and governors, and enable the school to operate smoothly. The school has not had an external financial audit since its previous inspection. However, the administrative staff and the chair of the governors' finance committee have carried out their own detailed audit, using government guidelines. This showed that the school's procedures are of a high standard. Money that is allocated to the school for a specific purpose is used very well. For example, the money that is allocated for pupils with special educational needs is used to provide very good levels of support for them. The school has a very high number of learning support assistants, who are well trained and deployed effectively to support individual pupils and small groups. The school makes very effective use of new technology for administrative purposes. For example, all of the school's curricular plans are entered on to a shared site, to which all teachers have access, and the headteacher uses a spreadsheet to record and track pupils' progress and their targets.

55. The members of the teaching and support staff provide a very good match to the demands of the curriculum. Class teachers and learning support staff are encouraged to develop their expertise and are all enthusiastic team members, supporting the senior management team well. The expertise of co-ordinators is well matched to subject responsibilities. Support staff and class teachers work together effectively as a committed team.

56. The co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage is an experienced teacher who has a good understanding of the needs of young children and the way they learn. As a member of the senior management team, she liaises closely with the other two year group leaders and ensures that the Foundation Stage receives adequate recognition and attention in all discussions about school development and future planning. The co-ordinator leads the team of Reception teachers in planning the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, which ensures consistency between the three classes. The teachers and assistants work effectively as a team, sharing expertise and providing mutual support. This helps to create a coherent unit, which clearly reflects the school's aims and its recently reviewed Early Years policy.

57. The well-qualified and committed co-ordinator for special educational needs carries out her responsibilities very efficiently. She tracks pupils' progress carefully, keeps concise records, monitors the work of learning support assistants, and organises their deployment, and liaises well with local junior schools. A designated governor has good involvement in the work of the school by shadowing support staff and discussing special educational needs issues. He plans to track the progress of three pupils with special educational needs from Reception to Year 2.

58. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is good. All teachers have set objectives that are linked to raising standards in English, and the headteacher's performance targets are similarly linked to raising standards. The headteacher, additionally, offers all staff an opportunity to discuss their career aspirations and professional development needs, and these are taken into account when putting together the school's staff development programme. There are very good arrangements for supporting new members of staff. Those who have joined the school recently speak highly of the support and encouragement they have received and feel very much part of the team.

59. In September 1999, the school moved into new, purpose built, high quality accommodation, which is a great improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection, when the accommodation was poor. The outside play areas, classrooms and other aspects of the building are very good. Outside all of the Reception classrooms are fenced patios. These secure and safe areas are ideal for learning through play and physical development, in addition to the separate play area for children in the Foundation Stage. The building provides wheel-chair access, and the upper floor of the school can be reached by a lift. The school staff maintain the building well and all areas are kept spotlessly clean. Opportunities for letting out the school buildings are taken, especially to organisations within the local community. The school makes very good use of outside facilities, including the swimming pool in the neighbouring junior school, the public library and the town's museum.

60. The provision of learning resources in the school is satisfactory, overall. Resources are adequate to teach the curriculum in mathematics, science, history, religious education, music, design and technology and information and communications technology. Resources for special educational needs, physical education, art, geography, the Foundation Stage and English are good. The school has a good range of books located in classrooms, in corridors and in the library.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

1. Raise the standards of the pupils' work in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics, science and history by:

- developing the extent and effective use of the pupils' spoken vocabulary and listening skills;
- ensuring that there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' use and understanding of mathematical and scientific vocabulary;
- paying particular attention to raising boys' attainment;
- ensuring that the pupils develop their writing skills more fully in all subjects of the curriculum;
- making sure that all teachers expect the pupils to produce written work that is of high quality and neatly presented;
- being certain that the pupils' work is marked in ways which help them to improve;
- increasing the rigour with which the pupils' written work is monitored;
- making sure that enough time is allocated to teaching science in Year 2;
- ensuring that the curriculum is planned to meet the needs of more able pupils.

(Paragraphs 2-5, 14, 17, 19, 22, 24, 76, 77-79, 81-82, 84-85, 87-90, 93-95, 108, 112)

2. Improve the pupils' attendance by:

- working closely with parents and the educational welfare service to find ways to reduce the currently high level of authorised absence;
- finding ways to improve the pupils' punctuality.

(Paragraphs 12, 36)

3. Increase the effectiveness of the school improvement plan by:

- extending it to include priorities for development over a three-year period;
- ensuring that it focuses sharply on the need to raise standards and shows how this will be addressed;
- formulating specific, measurable criteria by which governors can assess how successful the school has been in meeting its stated objectives.

(Paragraph 50)

4. Strengthen the role of the governing body in monitoring the performance of the school by:

- ensuring that governors are actively involved in discussing the priorities to be included in the school improvement plan and in reviewing progress towards the school's targets and objectives;
- providing governors with succinct information about the standards achieved by the pupils and how these compare with other schools.

(Paragraph 52)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

1. Continuing to develop and streamline assessment procedures across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 39, 49, 92, 100, 104, 107, 116, 125, 129)

2. Continuing to develop the role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring standards, and the quality of teaching and learning.

(Paragraphs 51, 92, 97, 100, 104, 107, 113, 122)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9	49	40	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	242
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	58

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	93

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	56	31	87

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	22	42
	Girls	28	28	27
	Total	58	50	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (72)	57 (74)	79 (91)
	National	[83] (82)	[84] (83)	[90] (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	46	25
	Girls	28	27	24
	Total	53	73	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	61 (71)	84 (85)	56 (86)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	151
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	269

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	9	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	453936
Total expenditure	442671
Expenditure per pupil	1800
Balance brought forward from previous year	22707
Balance carried forward to next year	33972

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	242
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	25	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	45	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	38	9	5	1
The teaching is good.	66	31	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	25	5	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	29	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	46	5	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	66	29	2	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	28	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	29	17	6	27

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

62. All children are admitted to the Reception classes in the autumn term and all start school part-time. They move on to full-time attendance according to their birth date and which class they are in. Children born between September and December attend on a part-time basis for the first half term, and then become full-time. Those born between January and Easter attend part-time for the whole of the autumn term and full-time from January. The children whose birthdays fall between April and August attend part-time until the February half term. Most of the children have attended local playgroups before starting school. Shortly after they start school, teachers carry out assessments, which show what children already know and can do. The results of these show that the attainment of children on entry to the school is below average, and, in some years, well below average, especially in communication, language and literacy skills. This is considerably lower than at the time of the school's previous inspection, when the children's attainment on entry was judged to be average. There have been a number of improvements in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection, the most notable being the accommodation. The spacious Reception classes have interconnecting doors, which allow for children to move between them and share resources, or for each class to be self-contained. Each room opens out on to a large and attractive fenced patio area, which provides many opportunities for outdoor learning and physical development. There is also a separate outdoor play area for the children to use at playtime, which is well equipped with clambering equipment and a safe surface. The Foundation Stage is better resourced than it was four years ago, especially in terms of fiction and non-fiction books.

63. There is a clear policy and a long-term curriculum plan, which covers nine topics throughout the year. Teachers work closely together to plan the detail for each week's lessons, and this ensures a consistent approach, whilst allowing teachers to match activities to the differing needs and capabilities of the children in their class. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Foundation Stage is good in all areas of learning, as it was at the time of the last inspection. It is particularly strong in personal, social and emotional development. The quality of teaching promotes good progress, and enables children to reach average standards in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development by the end of the Reception year. However, although the teaching is good, it is not able to compensate fully for the children's poorly developed skills in speaking and listening, language, literacy and mathematics, and standards in these areas remain below average by the end of the Reception year. The previous inspection found standards to be average in all areas of learning by the age of five.

Personal, social and emotional development

64. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they leave the Reception class. More able pupils are already achieving the goals in some aspects. This shows good achievement, given the children's low starting point, and reflects the skilful teaching in the Reception classes, where children are given much encouragement to be confident about what they can achieve. They work and play together well and are learning to take turns and to share resources fairly. They choose activities sensibly and participate in them with enthusiasm. Most are able to dress and undress themselves without too much help, and are encouraged to be independent in taking care of their personal hygiene.

They concentrate well and show interest in what they are doing. For example, children became engrossed in imaginative play in the 'baby clinic', dressing and undressing their 'babies', putting on nappies and weighing the 'babies'.

65. Teachers place significant emphasis on this area of learning, as many children start school with immature skills. They encourage children to explore new learning and value their ideas. This builds the children's confidence and self-esteem well. The teachers and assistants have consistent and appropriate expectations of all children, and establish routines that help them to feel secure. They provide time and opportunity for children to collaborate with each other, as when they build large constructions, play in the home corner and 'baby clinic' and act out stories. Teachers and assistants help children to form constructive relationships with each other and with adults, and show them how to behave in different situations. They encourage consideration for others, and they affirm and praise good behaviour while helping children to understand what is unacceptable and why.

Communication, language and literacy

66. Although children make good progress in this area of learning, many start school with poor communication skills and have a lot of ground to make up. By the end of the Reception year, standards are below average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Although children are able to express their thoughts and ideas simply, most are not yet able to use language imaginatively, and their knowledge of sounds is below that expected for their age. Although children sit quietly and are attentive when the teacher is explaining new ideas or asking them about what they have read together, it is clear that many are not really listening carefully. Teachers are aware of this barrier to learning and are trying a number of different strategies to overcome it, which are having a good impact. Children listen to stories with increasing attention, and some are able to recall the main points well. Some lose concentration very easily and are unable to offer responses to what they have heard. When speaking, the more able children articulate their ideas clearly and express them well. They speak audibly and with confidence. Less able children have difficulty in finding the words to convey what they want to say and often speak indistinctly, drawing on a limited range of vocabulary. The children show awareness of rhyming words. For example, when the oldest children were sharing *I Fell Out Of Bed* as a whole class activity, some were able to predict rhyming words by looking at the pictures and thinking of the meaning. A minority of children link sounds to letters confidently and some write and build simple words. Children use writing as a means of communication and most explain what they have written, even if there are no recognisable words or letters. They attempt writing for different purposes, such as shopping lists and letters to Mum, and most are beginning to form letters correctly. More able children write sentences that contain some recognisable words and others that have the correct initial sound.

67. Teachers and assistants provide an environment that is rich in language and set up many activities that are designed to encourage children to interact with each other, such as construction tasks, role-play, cooking, going for walks around the local area and working on the computer in pairs. Adults continually initiate conversations with children and use every opportunity to develop vocabulary and reinforce grammatical conventions. They provide interesting and stimulating opportunities to foster children's enjoyment of spoken and written language, by sharing 'Big Books' with them, teaching them rhymes and action songs, and organising different scenarios for imaginative play. For example, children have experienced a 'bear hunt', acted out the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, used an order pad to take customers' orders in the 'winter café' and visited the 'baby clinic'. Very good assessment and recording procedures provide teachers with detailed information about children's achievements and this is used very well to set targets and plan work for each child that is appropriate and sufficiently challenging. Teachers introduce elements of the National Literacy Strategy as the

year progresses, according to the children's stage of development, and this prepares them well for the move into Year 1.

Mathematical development

68. Teachers provide a good variety of practical experiences for children that enable them to make good progress in their mathematical development. However, this does not fully compensate for the low starting point of many, with the result that standards remain below average by the end of the Reception year. Although children become more confident in recognising numbers and counting to ten or beyond, many are unable to use their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems. Most children attempt to count to ten and many achieve this correctly. Some can count well beyond ten whilst others stumble over the order of numbers. In one lesson, children held up number cards to show "the smallest number" and "the number that comes after three". More able children count two pence coins up to a total of 12 pence and work out how many objects are left when some are taken away. They sort and name two-dimensional shapes and understand everyday words that are used to describe position. In one class, children worked with the teacher to estimate and measure how many beads they could thread on a string in one minute. In another, they made clock faces to show o'clock times and explained what they might be doing at different times of the day. Many children found this difficult and did not have a good understanding of time. Some children programmed a small toy robot, which involved using directional language and counting to four. A significant proportion of the children are unable to solve practical problems using mathematical ideas and methods without the help of teachers and assistants, and need much reinforcement and repetition in order to assimilate new ideas.

69. Teachers use every opportunity to reinforce learning through practical experience. They place a good emphasis on developing mathematical vocabulary, as this is a particular weakness, and give children opportunities to use mathematical language in play activities, by singing songs and number rhymes, and through stories and reading books. When children are engaged in structured play activities, teachers and assistants talk to them and ask questions that develop their mathematical understanding, such as "How many babies are there?" and "Can you show me the smallest one?" Teachers provide children with an interesting range of resources to help develop their mathematical understanding, such as number fans, so that they can hold up numbers in whole class sessions in response to the teacher's questions and she can then see which children recognise the correct numbers. They use 'compare bears' of different sizes when identifying 'smaller' and 'largest'. Imaginative play involves children in using scales to weigh 'babies' and working out a bill in a café. Teachers gradually introduce elements of the National Numeracy Strategy when they judge children are ready and this prepares them well for moving into Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. Children make good progress in this area of learning and are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year. Children are confident and curious investigators and use their senses effectively to find out about the world around them. For example, after a walk around the local area, they drew pictures of what they had seen, heard, smelt and touched. They observed tomatoes change colour, blew bubbles and watched puddles grow smaller as they evaporated. Children helped to improve the school environment by planting bulbs and expressed their likes and dislikes about the local area. They show independence in designing and making a variety of objects. For example, children work together to build large structures, roads and railways. They select tools and materials when making finger puppets, robots and vehicles and experiment with different ways of

joining things together. They learn to use computers and programmable toys confidently, and are developing an understanding of past and present. For example, they distinguish between old and new bears and look at pictures of themselves as babies to see how they have changed. Children learn about Christian festivals such as harvest, Christmas and Easter and some of the traditions that are associated with them such as Christingles.

71. Teachers and assistants provide a rich variety of experiences for children in this area of learning. They take children on walks around the local area at different times of the year, so that they can observe the changing seasons and learn about keeping safe. They plan topics very well to incorporate a range of learning opportunities. For example, in the first half of the spring term, when the topic was 'Weather', children enjoyed books about winter, looked for signs of winter on a 'winter walk', made snowflake biscuits, learned about penguins and polar bears and found out about the North and South Poles. They made ice and watched it melt, tested different materials to see if they were waterproof and made toy umbrellas. Teachers prepare children well for the National Curriculum in Year 1 by giving them opportunities to carry out investigations, make simple maps, and find out about the past. For example, children tasted orange squash, orange juice, orange barley and fizzy orange and expressed their preferences. They made a map to show the route Goldilocks followed to the three bears' cottage and asked their parents about things that had happened in the recent past.

Physical development

72. Children make good progress in developing physical control and co-ordination and are on course to achieve average standards by the end of the Reception year. In lessons in the hall, they move around imaginatively, safely and with growing confidence. For example, in one lesson, children explored different ways of moving across, under, over and through apparatus while curling and stretching their bodies. They demonstrated good awareness of space and of their own bodies as they slithered, wriggled and pulled themselves along. In a music and movement lesson, children devised their own sequences of movement, stretching and twisting their bodies. In outdoor play, children use small apparatus such as stilts, balls, beanbags and quoits to develop physical dexterity and co-ordination. They throw and catch, take part in parachute games and practise clambering on and through playground equipment. In the classroom, children use a range of small and large equipment, tools and materials with increasing control. They build with construction kits, dress and undress dolls, paint, write and draw. They mould play dough and use pastry cutters to cut out shapes.

73. Teachers and assistants ensure that all children have a wide range of opportunities to engage in physical activities, both in the classroom and outdoors. They provide an interesting range of resources to stimulate children and make learning fun. There are always activities that involve handling and manipulating small equipment, such as building blocks, puzzles and toy people, animals and vehicles. Children have lots of opportunity to learn to control the mouse when operating programs on the computer. Lessons in the hall are well planned to ensure that children are engaged in physical activity for most of the time and not queuing for their turn to get on to the apparatus. Teachers explain the importance of warming up muscles at the beginning of a lesson and show children how they can improve their performance. The opportunities for physical development on the patio areas are not yet fully developed. Teachers have identified this aspect of learning as a priority for development.

Creative development

74. Children make good progress in this area of learning and are on course to achieve average standards by the end of the Foundation Stage. They explore and develop a sound understanding of colour, texture, shape and space as they paint and draw pictures and make models. In one lesson, children used different colours, textures and shapes as they printed repeating patterns with sponges,

bricks and cotton reels. Some drew pictures using a computer program. In another lesson, children observed spring flowers and mixed different colours of paint to try and reproduce the colour of the flowers. They sing simple songs from memory with great enthusiasm and show increasing skill in matching actions to music. Children use musical instruments to create sounds in order to express ideas and feelings. For example, in one lesson, a group of children explored different musical instruments and created loud and quiet sounds to represent day and night. Children use their imagination well in role-play and many become completely engrossed in the imaginary situations they have created. They respond to music through dance and to stories by acting them out.

75. Teachers provide an imaginative and well-planned range of experiences for children's creative development. These have recently included bubble painting, leaf printing, creating sound effects to accompany a story, making bear masks, drawing self-portraits and participating in a number of different role-play situations. There are many opportunities to sing songs and rhymes, and to listen to these on tape using the headphones. Teachers and assistants encourage children to experiment and familiarise them with different materials and textures by providing a very good assortment of resources from which to choose, for example when making a collage. They teach painting and drawing skills and introduce children to shades and tones of colour, which lays a firm foundation for the art curriculum at Key Stage 1. They give children opportunities to learn the names of instruments and to discover the sounds they make, which prepares them well for future experiences in music. All adults place very good emphasis on developing the children's imagination through the variety of activities that are planned within each topic.

ENGLISH

76. Overall, standards in English are well below those normally found for seven year olds. This represents a decline from the standards reported at the previous inspection in 1997 when reading and writing were judged to be average. However, this judgement was not reflected in the school's results in the end of Key Stage 1 national tests and assessments in that year, when standards in both reading and writing were well below average. Results in the national tests and assessments in 2000 show that standards were well below average in reading and very low in writing when compared with all schools and with similar schools. Over the past four years, standards in reading and writing have remained fairly constant although there was a drop in 2000. The school's target for 76 per cent of its pupils to reach the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2001 is realistic in view of the ability of the year group. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, compared with their earlier attainment, and make good gains in confidence as a result of sensitive, well focused support. However, some pupils make insufficient progress in English as they move through the school. During the inspection, this was particularly evident in boys' writing and in the contributions of both boys and girls to oral sessions. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in learning English and achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. This is because they receive very good support from a specialist teacher, and are also supported well in the classroom.

77. The school has identified the need to raise standards in writing and spelling and to address the underachievement of some boys in both reading and writing. These and other targets for development are appropriate. Spelling has been an issue for the school for several years but the various strategies and approaches adopted have not had an impact on standards.

78. The profile given to language in the school is not high enough and does not provide a sufficiently stimulating and challenging environment for those pupils who enter the school with weak skills in spoken language and in their range of ideas. Although some teachers emphasise to pupils the importance of being good listeners to promote their learning, there is not a sharp enough focus on developing the oral and listening skills of many pupils to compensate for their low starting point. Some

teachers do not actively reinforce and extend pupils' language and build up their confidence as speakers. Drama is not fully exploited as a means of developing pupils' communication skills. Displays do not adequately celebrate language and the world of books, and specific vocabulary is not always introduced appropriately in other subjects. Teachers do not seize opportunities enough in lessons to explore the richness of language and to develop in pupils an enjoyment of, and fascination with, words. The insufficient development of pupils' speaking and active listening skills hinders their progress in writing and spelling and their success in other areas of the curriculum.

79. In Year 2, standards in speaking and listening are well below average. There was no judgement in the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy listening to stories, rhymes and poems but some, especially boys, soon lose concentration. Their weak listening skills are often masked by their good behaviour as they become passive. More able pupils express their ideas thoughtfully and use a growing vocabulary, but many pupils have a narrow range of words and indistinct pronunciation and need support from a teacher or assistant to develop their responses in any detail. Pupils' limited vocabulary and lack of confidence, which prevent them from expressing their ideas clearly and audibly, were evident in a Year 2 'circle time' when they discussed managing their behaviour on their forthcoming trip to the environmental centre. When asked what the best part of the trip would be, some lacked the vocabulary to sustain their ideas - 'seeing animals', 'seeing friends', 'short break from working' - and others did not have the words or confidence to reply at all in spite of the supportive environment created by the teacher. Similarly, in a 'Golden Assembly', some pupils were too shy to read their work, whilst others spoke inaudibly and needed gentle guidance from the headteacher to share their achievement.

80. Standards in reading are below average in Year 2. Pupils enjoy books and take them home regularly to practise their skills with their parents. More able pupils confidently tackle relatively difficult words, using their phonic knowledge, and are developing appropriate independence. Average pupils read simple texts accurately and with understanding, using their developing knowledge of letter sounds to read regular words. Less able pupils read simple and familiar words but they soon start to hesitate and require frequent support. A strength of pupils' learning is the expressive quality of their reading, both individually and in class, which adds to the listener's enjoyment. 'Remember, we have to read with interesting voices!' encouraged a Year 2 teacher, when pupils were about to embark on *What can I write?* The pupils responded by reading with clear, expressive voices, modelled on the teacher. Although few pupils know how to locate reference books accurately, all Year 2 pupils spoke animatedly of their regular visits to Whitstable library where they have an interesting environment to browse and enjoy reading.

81. Standards in writing are well below average in Year 2. Some pupils are able to communicate their ideas in different forms such as stories, notes, invitations, instructions, and rhymes. Their writing shows an awareness of sentence formation but they use a narrow range of vocabulary. Less able pupils use simple sentences and phrases, which often show a lack of coherence. More able pupils have an appropriate understanding of the structure of a story and are beginning to use interesting vocabulary and to extend their ideas imaginatively. One pupil wrote about how she had disappeared into a rainbow and had found herself dressed in silver and gold. In a flight of fancy, another pupil described her experiences in a magical house - 'flying right in front of me was a snake with feathery wings and an owl with hooves'.

82. Spelling is a weakness. Although spelling is taught, pupils' lack of good speaking skills restricts their ability to spell simple words accurately. The spelling of more than simple, familiar words relies on the use of phonics rather than a sound knowledge of spelling patterns. The handwriting of some pupils is consistently formed and clearly joined but many write with limited control over the use

of letters. Pupils' use of punctuation is very variable and not all use capital letters and full stops in their writing.

83. In all classes, standards in literacy are the same as those found in English and the development of literacy skills across the school is broadly satisfactory. Pupils write postcards to Barnaby Bear in geography, questionnaires for their parents and grandparents in history, explanations and evaluations in design and technology and empathise with the feelings of Jesus's friends in religious education. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning in English as in Year 2 pupils' work on *The Tiger who came to Tea* and in *Preston the Pig*.

84. The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. In the previous inspection, it was reported as being 'never less than satisfactory and sometimes good'. By constant praise and encouragement, and skilful behaviour management, all teachers create a caring and supportive environment, which promotes pupils' learning well. There was no sign of the disruptive behaviour reported at the previous inspection, which marred sound learning. However, teachers do not always have sound strategies for ensuring that all pupils are actively engaged in their learning rather than being passive observers. This undermines pupils' confidence in speaking and was particularly evident during discussions, when teachers did not pitch questions effectively so that pupils with special educational needs could make equally valid contributions with more able pupils. Sometimes, the shared text is not used appropriately to promote discussion and extend pupils' vocabulary. In a Year 2 lesson about traditional stories, the teacher did not exploit opportunities for developing pupils' interest in a rich and varied vocabulary by exploring the meanings behind the 'silky voice' of the wolf and his 'sharp toothed smile' in a version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. On the other hand, in another Year 2 lesson based on *Rosie writes again*, the teacher developed pupils' language skills well by emphasising the use of precise terms such as prefixes and introducing a note of humour which kept the momentum going well in work about the agreement of verbs. Similarly, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher skilfully used a dramatic picture of the Owl Babies as a focus to draw out thoughtful, descriptive words from pupils.

85. There is an appropriate degree of challenge in some lessons but others are characterised by low expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work. This lack of rigour means that vital learning is lost. In one lesson in Year 2, wrong spellings were left uncorrected on the board, words like 'stomped' 'scowled' and 'boldly' were accepted as adjectives, and unadventurous and imaginative contributions were given equal value by the teacher. The analysis of work showed that simple spellings are left uncorrected over time so that pupils become accustomed to them. There is also a lack of emphasis on planning and redrafting for older pupils and failure to insist that pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work. Such modest expectations of writing do not promote good progress for pupils of all abilities.

86. High expectations of content, quality and response were the hallmark of the session with the more able writers' group, where pupils investigated alternatives to the word 'said' to improve their writing. Pupils caught the air of excitement created by the teacher's dramatic and humorous use of role play, and became active and enthusiastic learners. They responded well to the teacher's emphasis on precise language and suggested apt alternatives such as 'screeched', 'bellowed', 'cheered' and 'mumbled'. Pupils were then given the task of writing a conversation between the two faces printed on cards. Having set strict time limits, the teacher insisted, "I want at least four phrases with correct use of speech, question and exclamation marks." The pupils set to work with a will and were soon absorbed by the activity. At the end, they were bursting to share their ideas. "Come on, you're an actress – you have your audience!" the teacher encouraged one pupil, who successfully conveyed the tones of anger and sadness in reading her work. Pupils made good progress in their understanding of how to enliven dialogue in their writing as a result of well-structured, knowledgeable and spirited teaching.

87. The curriculum in English is balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The National Literacy Strategy has not been implemented satisfactorily as the school has not yet tailored it to the needs of its pupils. The subject is satisfactorily led and the co-ordinator has played an important role in undertaking initiatives to address identified weaknesses. Monitoring of teaching has been carried out by the co-ordinator and the headteacher, supported by the literacy governor. Assessment procedures are good, which is an improvement since the last inspection when there was little evidence that they were regularly used to develop planning. Marking is generally unsatisfactory. It simply consists of ticks and praise - 'good idea' 'lovely words' - and does not give good guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work. Pupils have appropriate targets in literacy to motivate them but teachers do not raise pupils' awareness of them sufficiently to make them an integral part of learning. Classroom assistants are not always deployed efficiently at the beginning of the literacy hour, although they give good support in group work. Resources in English are good and the library, corridors and classrooms have a wide range of books to support research and to enable pupils of all abilities to enjoy their reading. This was a weakness in the last inspection, which has been addressed well. The subject is enhanced by the Reading Club, the Reading Recovery programme, storytellers, book weeks, puppeteers, regular visits to Whitstable library, and theatre groups, such as the Russian Theatre Company. English makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they write about their feelings, create rhymes with a storyteller and devise their own version of. Colourful and lively displays, such as pupils' celebration of book week when they made pictures *Handa's Surprise* of their favourite characters, give them a sense of pride and show that their efforts are valued.

MATHEMATICS

88. The findings of this inspection indicate that, by Year 2, standards are below average for pupils of this age. However, a good proportion of more able pupils achieve standards above the average level. Pupils' standards in numeracy are below those expected of seven year olds. The previous inspection report stated that the attainment of the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 was "in line with national standards", but in that year and subsequent years, apart from 1999, performance in national tests was well below the national average. Given their below average attainment on entry, pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. In the national assessment tests in 2000, the pupils' results were well below average compared with all schools and with similar schools. The improved standards noted in this inspection, when compared with the pupils' performance in the tests in 2000, is mainly because there are a smaller number of pupils in Year 2 with special educational needs. In addition, pupils are now taught in groups, where the teaching is better matched to their needs. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress. In the national tests, boys do significantly less well than girls and trends in the last four years indicate a growing disparity. These differences between boys' and girls' attainment were also noted during the inspection.

89. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at Key Stage 1. About half of the lessons seen were good and just under a quarter were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is a good improvement on the findings of the school's previous inspection, and is a direct result of better management of pupils' behaviour. This has led to an improvement in their learning and progress. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy well to teach basic skills. They use their good subject knowledge effectively, for example, in whole class teaching, where they work hard to involve pupils in mathematical discussion. This is not always easy, because pupils often lack sufficient verbal skills to respond at a level that helps them develop their mathematical thinking. In some lessons, teachers do not give enough emphasis to the vocabulary of mathematics and this hinders pupils' progress over time. Mathematics lessons are well planned and good use is made of learning support

assistants who are sometimes used to record how well pupils learn. This provides very useful information for teachers to help them to meet the needs of individual pupils. In most lessons, teachers present pupils with good levels of challenge. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on time, less able pupils were expected to learn the relationship between analogue and digital representations of the hour and of half past. They used what they had learned well, and applied this satisfactorily in the tasks that followed the whole class teaching session.

90. In a lesson that involved a group of more able pupils in sorting and classifying information, the teacher constantly challenged pupils to refine their understanding by frequent questioning. For example, "What would be a better way of showing this information?" or, "What were we saying yesterday about checking our results?" This lively and probing approach, with good emphasis on the language of mathematics, encouraged pupils to think mathematically. They enjoyed collecting the data, recorded it in graphical form, worked independently and produced good results. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils learned to solve simple problems by sorting information. They classified packs of crisps according to colour, voted on their preferences and then interpreted their findings by counting and using simple addition and subtraction processes. In this lesson, the teacher had very good interaction with the pupils. For example, she encouraged them to express their understanding of the task by asking them to suggest how a simple survey could be carried out. This held their attention so that concentration was assured and the majority made good progress in the development of ideas. Pupils in Year 1 are generally more able to discuss ideas and express their thoughts than those in Year 2. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently to extend their understanding or have sufficient effective strategies to help them verbalise their ideas. Also, pupils are not well served when teachers do not have high expectations about presentation and layout of work.

91. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. The effectiveness of current strategies to teach numeracy is satisfactory because standards are beginning to improve. In Year 1, pupils read and write numbers involved in creating a simple block graph and, in Year 2, they make use of mental operations, but they are not all confident in doing this. There are some links with other subjects. For example, pupils carefully measure the distance travelled by toy cars in a scientific investigation, and, in information and communication technology, pupils use a specific program to create and print symmetrical patterns.

92. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced. The co-ordinator has carefully linked the commercial scheme of work for mathematics to the National Numeracy Strategy and teachers work together to plan the curriculum. This has the effect of ensuring that pupils have an appropriate progression of mathematical experiences. Pupils' work and test results are carefully recorded and analysed. This is an improvement on the previous inspection, where, in some classes, pupils' work was not assessed regularly or thoroughly enough. However, teachers make insufficient use of this information when they plan the curriculum to meet the differing needs and capabilities of pupils. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and experienced, and provides very good guidance to other members of staff, both formally and informally. The teaching of mathematics has been monitored, but the effect of this is limited. This is because the information gathered has not been used widely enough to affect teaching so that standards are raised. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met.

SCIENCE

93. In Year 2, standards are below average, which is lower than at the time of the last inspection. This is partly because there is a much higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than four years ago. However, there has not been enough emphasis on raising standards in science recently and the amount of time given to teaching the subject, especially in Year 2, is not enough to

ensure that all aspects are taught in sufficient depth. In the 2000 end of key stage assessments by teachers, standards were very low in comparison with the national average. Only just over half of the pupils attained the standards expected of them by the age of seven, and no pupils attained higher than average standards. In Year 1, however, pupils are attaining average standards. This is because there is good coverage of all aspects of the curriculum, and there is evidence of some higher than average attainment. No significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls were observed during the inspection. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, though the most able pupils in Year 2 are not achieving the standards of which they are capable. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress.

94. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, at Key Stage 1, but good in Year 1. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when one quarter of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Although some good teaching was observed in Year 2, an analysis of the pupils' work that has been completed during the year shows that this is not consistent. Some pupils have recorded very little work and the presentation of written work is generally of a low standard. There is insufficient development of pupils' literacy skills through science. The effectiveness of the teaching is also limited by the time spent on the subject in Year 2, which is well below that seen in most schools. There is, nevertheless, throughout the key stage, a good emphasis on learning through investigation and exploration. During the inspection, pupils visited the Canterbury Environmental Centre, where they were able to observe at first hand a variety of pond life. After a very good introduction from resident staff, which captivated the pupils and placed due emphasis on safety considerations, they examined pond creatures under microscopes and magnifying glasses, and were able to discriminate between creatures with shells and those without, and to identify how many legs they had. In a good follow-up lesson back at school, the teacher reinforced what the pupils had learned through questioning and giving them opportunities to describe what they had found. One pupil explained, "I found out a water beetle is orange and brown" and another said, "I found that blood worms eat dead plants". More able pupils were able to remember a cyclops and a water boatman and one gave a very good description of a leech. Another drew a conclusion from what she had learned: "Most creatures with six legs are eaten by fish". Through this discussion of what they had observed, pupils increased their ability to sort animals into groups according to simple features, such as the number of legs, and increased their knowledge and understanding that different living things are found in different habitats. They began to realise that some animals feed on others. Some pupils used the Internet to find out information about animals from different habitats.

95. The pupils' work shows that they have a sound understanding of how electrical circuits work and that they know how moving objects are affected by different forces. In one investigation, pupils tested how far a toy vehicle travelled when rolled down a ramp. They varied the height of the ramp, and estimated and then measured the distance travelled. In some aspects of the National Curriculum, more able pupils are given the opportunity to achieve above average standards. However, some aspects, such as materials, light and sound, although covered in Year 1, are not revisited at a higher level in Year 2, and this limits pupils' attainment in those areas. In addition, the attainment of some pupils in Year 2 is clearly inhibited by their weak language skills and limited vocabulary. Sometimes, teachers place a good emphasis on developing pupils' scientific vocabulary, but on occasions, this is not fully exploited. Many pupils still find it difficult to express their ideas clearly, both in speaking and writing.

96. Some good work on materials was evident in the pupils' work in Year 1. They described the properties of materials, such as metal - "smooth and hard" - and clay - "squashy". Pupils then sorted materials according to different criteria, including shiny or dull, magnetic or non-magnetic, and whether they were 'see through'. They carried out an experiment to find out which materials would be best to make a toy umbrella. They tested them by dripping water on to them and then sorted them according

to their waterproof qualities. Teachers provided different formats for pupils to record their work, which took good account of their abilities. More able pupils were able to describe their observations using scientific language and record their findings in simple tables. The work was well presented and showed that pupils had taken good care over it.

97. The co-ordinator for science is in her first year of teaching and is gradually taking on responsibility for different aspects of its development. However, she is not expected to take full responsibility until the next school year. A science specialist, she has considerable expertise and is enthusiastic about developing the subject in the future. There has been no monitoring of standards or of the quality of teaching and learning in science for some time. The subject has not had a high profile in the school since the last inspection, but this is now improving. A new policy is in place and revised curricular planning takes account of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work. A long term curriculum plan shows which aspects of the National Curriculum are to be taught in each term throughout Key Stage 1, but this does not allow for sufficient revisiting of topics in Year 2 to ensure that more able pupils receive sufficiently challenging work in all aspects of the subject. Teachers in each year group plan each week's work together, and this makes for consistency across the three classes. Plans clearly show the purpose of each lesson and the learning that will take place. Although there is some evidence that pupils use information and communication technology to support their learning, this is not fully developed. Current assessment procedures are informal and time consuming, as they involve teachers in writing individual comments about every pupil. They are not used effectively to guide teachers' planning. The subject is adequately resourced, but does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for more able pupils in Year 2.

ART AND DESIGN

98. The attainment of pupils in art and design is average in Year 2 and all pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress. This judgement includes those pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards are the same as reported in the previous inspection.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. This judgement is based on the lessons observed and an analysis of work previously produced by pupils. The analysis of pupils' work and displays seen in the school indicate that, although teaching is generally satisfactory, expectations are not high enough for pupils to produce work of consistently good or high quality. Work of better quality, however, bears the marks of art technique taught well. For example, crayon and pastel compositions on a 'Dream Environment', related to pupils' work with the Canterbury Environmental Centre, are bold and imaginative with a good use of colour. The immediate locality is a rich source of material and the school makes very good use of this. In their history work, pupils have drawn timber-fronted houses. The quality of many of these drawings is good, with aspects of shading and proportion well developed. In Year 1, teachers use their subject knowledge well to show pupils how to achieve satisfactory effects. For example, in one lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to blend and shade pastels. This was a good challenge for them to learn a new technique, so when they attempted to represent a vase of daffodils, they worked with care and interest. The teacher provided instruction and encouragement as they worked to help them produce satisfying results.

100. The scheme of work for art and design is based on that produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, when deficiencies in curricular planning were identified. Information and communication technology is used to some extent to develop the breadth of the art curriculum, but there is only a small amount of three-dimensional artwork on display. The headteacher has made good use of connections with the community to introduce the work of local artists to pupils. This is seen in a number of stimulating

displays. Artists also visit the school and this enriches the cultural experience of pupils. Class teachers keep records of what pupils do and the co-ordinator monitors some aspects of pupils' work by looking at displays, but a more systematic approach to assessment is not established. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has identified what needs to be done to continue the improvement of art and design. There is an action plan, but the co-ordinator does not have time allocated to monitor pupils' work or teaching.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Pupils' attainment is average in Year 2. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were found to be below national expectations. This was because much of the pupils' work was based on art and there was not enough emphasis on teaching pupils the skills associated with designing and making. Teachers' knowledge and expertise in the subject have improved, as has curricular planning, and they now provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to design and make different products and to evaluate their work. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and pupils who are learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in the subject.

102. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, although there is evidence of some good teaching in both Years 1 and 2. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was unsatisfactory. At that time, teachers' expectations were too low and their planning did not address the requirements of the National Curriculum. These weaknesses have been remedied. In a good lesson in Year 2, where the focus was on designing vehicles, the teacher helped pupils to develop their ideas for designs through skilful questioning, which focused pupils' attention on key features: "What shape box would be best to make your aeroplane?" There was good reinforcement of earlier learning and emphasis on safety considerations: "What do we have to remember about making a hole?" The teacher made effective use of an overhead projector to show pupils an example of a design, and how to label it. She provided pupils with a good variety of resources so that they could select what to use at the making stage and make a list of their requirements. Teachers do not always pay enough attention to developing technical vocabulary and sometimes miss opportunities to make effective links with mathematics. Pupils' completed work shows that there is some good teaching of specific skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 investigated different ways of joining materials, including sticky tape, staples and a glue gun. They decided which worked best and used this information when designing and making Joseph's 'coat of many colours'. In this activity, more able pupils used tools with some accuracy to cut and shape materials and join them together. The pupils evaluated their finished work and identified how they could improve it. Less able pupils are supported well by classroom assistants, and more able pupils are given the opportunity to develop their literacy skills well by writing instructions, lists and evaluations.

103. There was also evidence of good teaching in the work completed by pupils in Year 1, who designed and made an envelope to transport *Flat Stanley*. They began by listening to the story, and then investigated how envelopes are made, by taking them apart. There was good teaching of technical vocabulary: for instance, pupils learned the term 'template' and made their own from an envelope they had taken apart. They explored and discussed joining techniques and safety factors. A key idea in their design was comfort for Flat Stanley, and this led to comparisons of the advantages and disadvantages of different materials to cushion the inside of the envelope. As a result, some chose bubble wrap, whilst others decided that fabric or cotton wool would be the most comfortable. Finally, pupils discussed the finished products and decided whether they had met the original criteria for their design. They assessed how to improve their envelopes and recorded their evaluations.

104. The co-ordinator is new to the post. She has already made a good start on managing the subject, is enthusiastic about its future development and has put together a plan to address key priorities in the near future. She has attended training courses and is using the information gained from these well to develop her role. There is a sound policy and the school is adapting the nationally recommended scheme of work to suit its own needs. Topics are allocated to year groups in each term, and teachers in each year group plan the week's work together to ensure consistency. Assessment procedures rely on teachers keeping written notes on each pupil's achievements, which is cumbersome. However, this is due to be revised in the near future. The links with mathematics and information and communication technology are not fully exploited. However, the subject makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy skills. There is an adequate range of resources to support learning.

GEOGRAPHY

105. Standards in geography are average for seven year olds, and all pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils with special educational needs and those that have English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The previous inspection reported that attainment was in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and progress was satisfactory.

106. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The previous inspection reported that teaching was 'generally satisfactory'. In Year 2, only a very limited amount of work has been produced; this is mainly on 'Islands' and 'Journeys'. Teachers' subject knowledge is used well and good use is made of questioning in class discussions to extend and deepen pupils' understanding of important ideas. Teachers work hard at this, as pupils are not always willing to share their ideas or ask questions. This lack of verbal interaction demands that teachers present ideas and information in a way that engages pupils' interest. As they are generally skilful at this, they convey key ideas clearly. For example, in one lesson the teacher built up pupils' geographical vocabulary by taking them on a journey with 'Barnaby Bear'. She used a simple map and highlighted the features such as rivers, lakes and fields that Barnaby would see. By doing this, the teacher managed to stimulate a number of pupils to provide more detail in their responses to her questions. Thus, most pupils could describe some important features of an imaginary locality. In the limited amount of geographical work previously produced by pupils in Year 2, the layout and presentation indicate that teachers do not have very high expectations of what pupils should achieve. As a result, pupils' geographical skills are not well developed. In Year 1, a better range of work has been produced, and expectations of what pupils should be able to do are at least satisfactory. Year 1 pupils acquire knowledge of the locality, show evidence of understanding what has been taught and effectively apply the skills of recording their work.

107. The school uses the scheme of work produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The co-ordinator has examined some of the work that pupils do and teachers keep records of pupils' progress, but no fully developed whole school system of assessment has been established. Therefore, the aim to improve assessment, noted in the previous inspection report, is not fully met. The co-ordinator is keen to develop the subject and has a plan to meet specified aims, but the effectiveness of curricular planning and of teaching is not monitored. Very good use is made of the locality and some limited use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.

HISTORY

108. Standards in history are below average for seven year olds. In the previous inspection, standards were reported to be average. Although there is sound coverage of topics, pupils'

achievement in history is undermined by weaknesses in literacy skills. In this inspection, classroom observations were supplemented by an analysis of work and displays, scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. Pupils make sound progress as they move through the school and pupils with special educational needs achieve well compared with their earlier attainment.

109. A great strength of the teaching and learning of history is the way in which the school fully exploits the rich resources of Whitstable's history and draws upon its position in the heart of the town. Visits to places like Whitstable Museum, the Old Oyster Railway Line, the harbour and lifeboat station, the old school, St Alphege and All Saints churches and reminiscences from older inhabitants enable pupils to understand how local people lived in the past. History is brought to life for them as they walk through the streets of the town and discover the origin of names like 'Squeeze Gut Alley' and visit the War Memorial as part of the observance of Remembrance Day.

110. As in the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in history is satisfactory. The analysis of work in Year 2 showed that pupils are developing early research skills and have an appropriate sense of time for their age. They have sound insight into the Great Fire of London and infamous fires in Whitstable and are suitably aware of the importance of historical sources such as books, the Internet, videos and museums to enable them to develop their skills as young researchers. As a result of well-structured teaching and discussion, pupils have found out about Victorian toys and houses and have effectively compared Christmas festivities in Victorian times with the present day.

111. Pupils in Year 1 enjoy being time detectives. "Pretend you're in a time bubble, going back ten years. What happened then?.....1940s." The teacher's dramatic opening quickly transported pupils in their imaginations back to Whitstable in the 1940s and the world of Anderson shelters, air raids and rationing. There was a good emphasis on precise vocabulary – "I don't like the word *stuff*," exclaimed the teacher. After watching a short video of life in the 1940s, pupils were able to identify features of war time life, such as the wireless, dried eggs, no bananas, spam and corner shops, as a result of the teacher's skilful questioning. Pupils had recently asked their grandparents to complete a questionnaire about life 60 years ago and this promoted learning well. In one class, pupils spoke of their grandparents' experiences as evacuees and one pupil had brought in pennies and a shilling to show his classmates. The teacher valued these contributions, which boosted self-esteem and confidence well. In another Year 1 class, the teacher sensitively led a discussion about how pupils would feel if they had been evacuees. "I'd worry that my mummy wouldn't want me any more," said one young pupil thoughtfully. In all classes, imaginative use of artefacts, such as a ration book, gas mask and replica of a newspaper, stimulated and developed learning well and enabled pupils to understand how they could use historical evidence to help them draw conclusions about the past. There was no sign of the misbehaviour reported at the previous inspection because teachers effectively channelled pupils' natural curiosity about the past.

112. Weaknesses in teaching and learning observed in some lessons included a lack of repetition and reinforcement of specific vocabulary, a flagging pace, so that the concentration of some pupils began to wane, failure to develop pupils' confidence in speaking skills and insufficient challenge for more able pupils. Weaknesses in written work included ready acceptance of poor presentation and a limited range and depth of recorded work, especially for more able pupils.

113. The subject is well led. The co-ordinator's creative approach to the subject opens up a wealth of varied and interesting opportunities for such young pupils to develop their skills and find out about the contribution of their own community to history. Teachers' planning, identified as a weakness by the last inspection, is now good, and assessment is satisfactory. The co-ordinator scrutinises pupils' work and displays but classroom monitoring is insufficiently developed. Information and communication technology satisfactorily supports teaching and learning in the subject and historical

skills are developed soundly, for example, as pupils write about the differences between their parents' childhood and their own. History makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through group work, discussions about moral issues and pupils' knowledge of their rich local heritage. Visits outside the town like Canterbury Cathedral, Parsonage Farm, Elham, and visitors who are willing to share their memories, enrich the curriculum. Pupils have researched and re-enacted the history of their own school from 1875 and have deposited a time capsule in the framework of the new building. Such activities, photographs and memorabilia give pupils a strong sense of the school's past and that they themselves are part of its history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. In Year 2, standards are average for seven year olds. This is the same as the judgement made by the school's previous inspection. Pupils' achievement in the subject is satisfactory, including that for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall. No direct teaching was seen during the inspection, but pupils were observed using computers in the context of other lessons. For example, some pupils in Year 2 typed sentences about Little Red Riding Hood in a literacy lesson, and, in a history lesson, others typed information about life in the 1940s, into which they imported pictures to illustrate their writing. Some pupils used computer programs in the literacy hour to help with spelling. When planning their work, teachers look to create useful links with other subjects within the overall topic theme for the term or half-term. For example, pupils in Year 1 created symmetrical patterns using a graphics program in connection with their work in mathematics. This not only reinforced their understanding of symmetry in an exciting and unusual way, but also increased their knowledge and understanding of what can be achieved using a computer and their dexterity in manipulating the mouse. Pupils in Year 1 also collected information about the different types of homes that people live in and entered this onto a database in order to produce a graph. This developed knowledge of how computers enable us to organise information, and also increased pupils' mathematical and geographical knowledge. Pupils in Year 2 used the Internet to find information about Canterbury Cathedral before their visit. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to change the font, size and colour of text and combine text with pictures to present information. They use the mouse to 'drag' words across the screen and place them in alphabetical order. In a Year 1 lesson that was observed during the inspection, the teacher made good use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in mathematics. Pupils rolled dice that showed different colours and recorded how many times each colour was thrown. Some pupils entered the information on to a computer database to create a graph.

116. The previous inspection noted that there was too little intervention in pupils' learning by teachers, and that pupils were allowed to 'play' on computers without direction. This weakness has been addressed. Computer tasks are well planned to reinforce what pupils are learning in the lesson and teachers monitor how pupils are getting on. At the time of the last inspection, there was no formal system for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress, and this is still the case. The co-ordinator has identified this as a priority to be addressed.

117. The subject co-ordinator has high levels of expertise and is leading development in the subject well. When the new school was built, a network of computers was installed, in addition to which the school has some older computers that still function adequately to support selected aspects of the curriculum. There are enough computers in each class to ensure that all pupils have regular access to them and sufficient opportunities to develop their skills. Pupils also use programmable toy robots and a digital camera. The co-ordinator has devised a comprehensive four-year action plan to develop the subject further and is keen to extend the range of software that is currently in use to support other

areas of the curriculum. A new policy is in place and the school is currently adapting a nationally recommended scheme of work to meet its own needs. Teachers in each year group plan closely together to ensure consistency. There have not been opportunities for the co-ordinator to observe teaching in other classes, but she has a good overview of teachers' planning and has collated samples of pupils' work to illustrate achievement.

MUSIC

118. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two music lessons were observed during the inspection. There was, therefore, insufficient evidence for judgements to be made on attainment and the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. In the previous inspection, standards were "barely satisfactory by the end of the key stage" and teaching was satisfactory overall. Discussions with teachers and pupils and observation of a video show that the school provides pupils with a sound range of musical experiences that cover all elements of the National Curriculum. There is no music specialist and all teachers are responsible for the teaching of music to their class.

119. In a Year 2 lesson on knowledge and understanding of sounds and basic graphic notation, the teacher worked hard to motivate pupils and promote confidence in their music making. She created a positive climate for learning by praising pupils for their good behaviour and explaining that silence was an important part of music. A good range of instruments was used and pupils played with rhythmic accuracy showing a fair sense of beat and tempo. The teacher appropriately emphasised the importance of the role of the conductor, and pupils responded well by paying close attention to cues for action. The pupils made sound gains in recognising, exploring and creating their own sounds with tuned and untuned percussion instruments and in early notation. However, they were not given enough opportunities to evaluate and improve their performance, and the pace of the lesson faltered as the organisation became over complicated.

120. A sense of fun and energy promoted learning well in a Year 1 lesson about wartime music, which effectively complemented pupils' study of life in the 1940s. They listened gleefully to a tape of wartime songs and captured the mood well by singing with lively enjoyment, adding rhythmic actions and keeping a steady beat to songs like 'Chick chick chick chicken' and 'Soldier Soldier'. In dramatic contrast with this air of excitement, the teacher quietly invited pupils to consider why music was so important in wartime. She skilfully evoked the atmosphere of being in a dark air raid shelter and led a thoughtful discussion where pupils suggested good reasons like keeping cheerful, to stop people being afraid and drowning the noise of bombing. Pupils also had useful ideas for improvising instruments like spoons, a washboard, and saucepans. They then played instruments that they had prepared for the lesson and thoroughly enjoyed their music making activities. The teacher had successfully conveyed her own zest and enthusiasm to the pupils, kept them active and engaged and made learning relevant and enjoyable.

121. In discussion, pupils find it difficult to talk about their musical experiences although the displays of Peter and the Wolf show that some pupils can recognise instrumental sections of the orchestra as well as some individual instruments. In assembly, pupils lack confidence when tackling a new song like 'New Life in Spring'. This was also the case at the last inspection. However, evidence from the video shows that they can sing a variety of songs from memory, including those with actions, with sound awareness of pitch and rhythm.

122. The policy has been updated recently but the coordinator's teaching commitment in a Reception class does not give her a sound overview of the subject, as there is no classroom monitoring. The schemes of work are taken from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines, although planning for progression in pupils' skills as they move through the school is

insufficiently developed. There is an appropriate supply of percussion instruments and listening music to enable pupils to broaden their experience in musical appreciation. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used to support teaching and learning. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a recorder group and church services and school productions such as 'The Sleepy Shepherd' allow many pupils to make music. Other musical experiences, such as a musical presentation by parents during book week, puppeteers and a visit from the Suzafun group who play brass instruments, make a sound contribution to pupils' social and cultural development

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. Standards of attainment are average for seven year olds and all pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in physical education. There are no differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls. These judgements are an improvement on those reported in the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be below national expectations.

124. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This judgement is an improvement on the last inspection, which found teaching to be unsatisfactory. No gymnastics lessons were seen during this inspection. Teachers present lessons well, make good use of demonstration, and sometimes use pupils to do this. As a result, pupils maintain their interest and are keen to do well. On one occasion, in Year 2, the teacher made good use of a recorded dance lesson. She interpreted the recorded instructions clearly for the pupils and expected them to listen carefully to the beat of the music and fit their movements to it. This was effective because pupils were eager and had good opportunities to practise and consolidate their understanding. In a games lesson, pupils responded well because the teacher outlined the purpose of the activities, had very good control and provided very good intervention to help them develop their skills of catching and throwing. In another lesson, a small group of pupils began to lose concentration. As the teacher was not aware of this, some who were less able did not do as the teacher instructed. However, once this was seen, the teacher had them fully involved again. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher expected the pupils to listen carefully when she gave instructions or made specific teaching points. For example, "Watch the ball all the time" or, "Roll it *slowly*". Good control was very evident, praise was used well and pupils acted in a mature manner as they developed sound skills. Teachers emphasise the benefits of physical activity to pupils and help them to understand how exercise affects their bodies. For example, after one lesson, the teacher told pupils to feel their heart rate, and a brief discussion ensured that pupils were aware of the effects of strenuous exercise. Pupils are sometimes asked to comment on their performance or that of others in lessons, but the opportunities to do this are too limited. Teachers and pupils are dressed appropriately, the latter in school physical education kit, and this helps to give the subject high status in the school.

125. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has developed the curriculum for games and gymnastics. In addition, lesson planning is clear and detailed, which means that teachers are able to provide pupils with well-structured activities to develop their skills. Pupils take part in swimming lessons during the summer term, although this is not a requirement for pupils of this age. Teachers keep records of what pupils do, but a whole school scheme of assessment is has not been devised. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, has worked hard to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and has produced a plan for further improvement. Teaching has been monitored, but not in Year 2. The purpose of monitoring has been to ensure that teachers are confident in their use of the scheme of work. A range of professional development activities has been organised for teachers, including meetings on the safety aspects of physical education. Accommodation and resources have been greatly improved since the previous inspection and are now very good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

126. As reported in the previous inspection, by the age of seven, pupils attain standards in religious education that meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Judgements in this inspection are based on classroom observations, analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of teachers' planning and displays and discussions with teachers and pupils. Pupils make sound progress in religious education as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are involved in all class activities and, with support and encouragement, achieve well compared with their previous attainment.

127. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is satisfactory. There was no judgement in the previous inspection. Teaching of the subject meets the aim of the religious education policy well in promoting pupils' spiritual awareness and developing sensitivity to the needs of others. A strong bond of trust and support exists between teachers and pupils, which promotes learning well, as pupils feel secure and able to express their ideas freely. This was evident in a Year 2 lesson, when pupils explored the feelings of Jesus's friends, such as Peter, John and Mary Magdalene, at his crucifixion and resurrection. They had a good understanding of the sequence of events of the Easter story and were able to identify with the opposite emotions felt on the 'Saddest day' and the 'Happiest day' and to empathise simply with them. By perceptive questioning, the teacher effectively drew out pupils' responses to the Bible readings and words to evoke the powerful feelings of the characters. In another Year 2 lesson on the same theme, there were missed opportunities for pupils to identify with the biblical characters through guided discussion before embarking on their role play so that they were not able to grasp the true significance of these events for Christians. The analysis of work also showed that Year 2 pupils have a sound understanding of the origins and beliefs of Judaism and why Moses was a great leader.

128. Pupils in a Year 1 lesson also examined why Christians celebrate Easter and appreciated the symbolism of the cross, which they could identify in the hall, church and churchyard. They were able to write or draw their own version of Jesus's encounter with Mary Magdalene as a result of the teacher's enthusiastic and dramatic reading of the story and her good organisation that provided pupils with both security and challenge. Year 1 pupils have also shared the experience of how a church welcomes a baby into its family through baptism, linked with work on the baptism of St John. They have also looked at how they are helped by people in the community like nurses and policemen. Through direct and well-planned teaching, pupils were encouraged to develop sensitivity and respect for other religions in their work on Divali, the Hindu festival of Light, when they discussed the theme of good and evil and the significance of the Diva lamp.

129. The subject is satisfactorily led and resourced. Themes in collective worship reinforce topics covered in religious education very effectively. Targets for development are appropriate, including Judaism in Year 2 and extending the study of Hinduism in Year 1. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, pupils' books and displays and gives informal advice to staff, but does not undertake classroom observation. Assessment is satisfactory but marking does not help pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Literacy skills are satisfactorily developed and there is little use of undemanding work sheets. Information and communication technology is used to support teaching and learning appropriately and pupils research information on cathedrals, synagogues and Hindu temples. Pupils visit Canterbury Cathedral as well as local churches. The vicar is a frequent visitor, but there are no members of different faiths to enable pupils to discover other religions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced when they reflect on prayers, celebrate Chinese New Year and learn that stories like Rama and Sita illustrate common themes in world religions.