

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTCOURT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gravesend

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118572

Headteacher: Mrs J Everest

Reporting inspector: Wendy Simmons
23674

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st June 2001

Inspection number: 196705

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Silver Road Gravesend Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Westcourt Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Esterson
Date of previous inspection:	14 th – 15 th July 1999

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9092	Ron Elam	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?
22745	Rosalind Johns	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language, Religious education, History, Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15271	Brian Farley	Team inspector	Mathematics, physical education, Information and communication technology, Design and technology, Equal opportunities, Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Westcourt Primary School educates boys and girls between the ages of three and 11. There are 145 pupils who attend this smaller than average primary school, 24 of whom attend the part-time in the Nursery class. One Nursery child and nine five year olds attend the full-time Reception class. There are similar numbers of boys and girls on roll. There are 93 pupils (70 per cent of the full time roll) on the school's register of special educational needs, which is well above the national average. A high proportion of these pupils are in Years 3, 4 and 6. Five pupils have statements of special educational need, which is higher than average. Eight pupils have significant and sometimes extremely challenging behaviour problems. Eighteen per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is average. Fifteen per cent of all pupils speak English as an additional language, which is high and over half of these are at an early stage of learning English. There are 32 pupils from traveller backgrounds. Forty three per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Attainment on entry to the school is very low overall. There are only a few more able pupils in the school. Until recently, the school had experienced significant instability. Fifteen new teachers joined the school in the last two years. The headteacher was appointed permanently in January 2001, after two terms as acting headteacher. The school serves a very needy community. There is high unemployment, overcrowded housing and the local authority cares for several pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The very good leadership from the new headteacher and strong teamwork are significant reasons why the school is developing. Teaching is satisfactory. Standards are very low, although the majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Behaviour and relationships are good. This is a very caring school where pupils are highly valued. Pupils from all backgrounds are fully included in school life but more able pupils do not achieve their full potential. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The procedures for promoting and improving behaviour are very good and are resulting in good behaviour and improving standards of work in the classroom.
- The 'Special Support Centre' is playing a crucial role in supporting pupils with extremely challenging behaviour and is playing an excellent part in reducing exclusions.
- Speaking and listening skills have improved considerably.
- Leadership shows a very clear and effective commitment to further improvement.
- The school provides very good moral and social education. Cultural education is good.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in subjects where they are lower than the average.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning by co-ordinators and limited assessment procedures to help teachers to plan challenging work. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough for more able pupils.
- Financial planning does not reflect how the school will manage the high overspend if the Local Education Authority fails to provide the funding for the 'Special Support Centre'.
- The curriculum, its implementation, organisation and resources. Work in the mixed aged classes is not planned systematically. The National Numeracy Strategy and use of information and communication technology, music, design and technology and swimming are underdeveloped.
- The rate of pupils' attendance at school.
- Parents' involvement in the work of the school.

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 1999 when it was taken out of 'Special Measures' as Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) found the school to be giving an acceptable standard of education. This inspection shows further good improvement since then in teaching, resources, health and safety and the Foundation Stage and in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement in behaviour is very good. There has been steady improvement in standards but unsatisfactory development in a few subjects and in the curriculum and assessment as a whole. The staff are successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and in enhancing the school's reputation in the local community. Attendance rates have not improved enough. The key issues from previous inspections have been addressed with determination, and the school has a very good capacity to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E*	E	E	E
Mathematics	E	E	E	D
Science	E	E*	E*	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

Average C

below average D

well below average E

Very low E*

The table shows very low standards of attainment compared with all and other very similar schools. Trends are consistently low. This school is in the bottom quarter of schools in the country. Improvements in teaching and very strong leadership by the new headteacher are steadily helping to raise attainment in English, mathematics and science. The 'Special Support Centre' plays an essential part in allowing all pupils the chance to improve their results. The school has correctly worked on improving behaviour, teaching and pupils' speaking and listening skills. Targets for improvement in English and mathematics are very challenging. This inspection finds standards at both key stages that are well below average in English, science, design and technology, geography and history. Standards are below average in mathematics, information and communication technology and religious education. Average standards exist in art and physical education. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their very low starting point overall, including those with special educational needs. Those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall and have made good progress in basic skills. The attendance of traveller children is too erratic to maximise their progress. More able pupils are not always challenged enough. Boys and girls achieve similar standards overall, but girls do better in reading. Children in the Nursery enter school at very low standards. By the end of the Foundation Stage, they have made good progress, but most are not on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Very low attainment is due to a complex mixture of reasons. These include high numbers of pupils who require very specific support, past instability in teaching, and pupils' lack of confidence. The organisation of teaching time, the quantity of resources and breadth in the curriculum are hampering improvement. Literacy and numeracy skills are not good enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school, but sometimes lack the motivation to try new things as they fear failure and have low self-esteem. They do not take enough pride in the presentation of work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Improvement is very good. The 'Special Support Centre' gives good support to pupils who can be challenging and disruptive in their normal class group. This allows all pupils to learn more successfully. Pupils respond positively to the school's high expectations of them.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are good. Pupils act responsibly and enjoy helping. Most understand how their actions affect others and show respect for different values and beliefs.
Attendance	Poor. It is well below the national average and is a further reason why standards of work are low. Approximately a quarter of pupils are absent for more than six weeks each year. Traveller pupils have an especially high level of absence. Unauthorised absence is exceptionally high. The school has difficulty in obtaining explanations from some parents about the reasons for absence.

Staff are working very hard and successfully to create a calm and caring school, in which pupils are gaining confidence and better self esteem. Last year, there were a high number of exclusions of pupils. This has dropped significantly due to the effectiveness of the 'Special Support Centre'.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is stronger overall than learning. The school is meeting the needs of pupils satisfactorily overall. However, pupils in the same year group do not always have exactly the same learning opportunities as others of the same age. This is due to the organisation of the curriculum for the mixed aged classes. Teaching is satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs and good in the 'Special Support Centre'. Overall, teaching is satisfactory for pupils with English as an additional language, and good when they receive specialist support. Traveller pupils learn best when they attend regularly. More able pupils are not always challenged enough as expectations of what they can do are not always high enough. Assessment information is too limited. Pupils sometimes find it difficult to work quickly, but teachers are working hard to help them to improve. There have been good improvements in teaching, especially in speaking and listening skills. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in lessons. The percentage of good teaching has increased from 22 per cent at the last inspection to 42 per cent. Overall, there was very good teaching in four per cent of lessons, one at each key stage. Teaching is good at the upper end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have experienced many changes in teachers and this has resulted in gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Learning is weakened by the organisation of the curriculum. Teaching is satisfactory in English, although the range of reading opportunities, presentation and depth of writing are underdeveloped. The National Literacy Strategy is effective in helping to improve standards. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics, but numeracy skills are not taught effectively and work is poorly presented. Overall, marking is too inconsistent. Teaching is satisfactory in science, art and religious education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in design and technology, music and information and communication technology as pupils are doing limited curricular work. In geography and history, teaching is satisfactory, but learning is unsatisfactory, as there are too few resources. Weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills hamper learning. In physical education, teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is good for the group of Reception children, as the class teacher mostly teaches them. Nursery children do not have enough opportunities to work with the most experienced staff and opportunities for them to learn through their play are too limited.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is satisfactory for the Foundation Stage, but is stronger for Reception than Nursery children. Elsewhere, the curriculum is unsatisfactory as noted in the teaching section. Limited teaching time means that some subjects are not covered in depth. Statutory requirements are not met in information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education and music. The amount of time given to several subjects is too low. Monitoring of the curriculum is beginning to be more effective. Extra curricular activities are very good and a significant strength of the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Assistants and the new co-ordinator provide valuable support. Individual education plans are good and contain appropriate improvement targets. Reviews are developing.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. They are well supported in class and by specialist visiting teachers. Resources are developing satisfactorily.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual development is satisfactory. Moral and social development is very good and is playing a major part in improving behaviour and pupils' self esteem. Cultural development is good. Pupils' wider understanding of British society is underdeveloped.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is good provision for personal, social and health education. Health and safety procedures are good. The school has very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are poor, but the school is working hard and quickly to improve them.

The school has worked hard to foster satisfactory links with parents. They are made to feel welcome. There are some minor omissions from the governors' Annual Report. Parental involvement has deteriorated since 1997. They are insufficiently involved in children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The headteacher's very good leadership is underpinning development. Subject co-ordinators are new to the school and give satisfactory leadership. Teamwork is strong. Everyone is committed to raising standards and improving pupils' education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with the headteacher and staff in shaping improvement. Development planning is organised yearly, but there is none beyond this, which is unsatisfactory. Parent governors do not play an active enough part in governing the school. Statutory requirements are not completely fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Staff and governors analyse test results to plan where improvement is needed. They are beginning to track pupils' progress. This is hampered by limited assessment procedures. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school uses its resources to provide a satisfactory standard of education. Expenditure is too high for the available budget, which is a weakness. Spending is closely linked to improving behaviour and standards. Governors have a satisfactory understanding about how to obtain the best value in decisions about spending.

The number of staff and their qualifications are satisfactory, except in the Foundation Stage where assistants' understanding of how children learn is inconsistent. Accommodation is very good. However, the youngest children do not have their own secure play area. There are insufficient resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards have improved. • The leadership of the new headteacher. • Behaviour is improving. • There has been a big improvement in their children's attitude to school and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More advice about how to help with homework. • Extra-curricular activities.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments. The findings of the inspection are that extra-curricular activities are very good and the provision of homework is generally satisfactory although there is some variation between classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The new headteacher, staff and governors show a strong and effective commitment to raising standards. Overall standards are much lower than average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their very low level when starting school. The recent good improvement in teaching and very good improvement in pupils' behaviour are having an impact on the steady raising of standards. The vast majority of pupils have experienced significant emotional and social difficulties in their home lives, which have had an impact on their school achievement. Nevertheless, more able pupils, are underachieving. In several subjects, the range and depth of the curriculum, low allocation of teaching time and lack of resources are limiting pupils' attainment so that they are not achieving as well as they could. The school recognises this and is already working to improve the situation. Children in the Reception group show good achievement.
2. There are numerous reasons why standards are so low. Overall, 70 per cent of pupils in the school have special educational needs. A few pupils find it hard to concentrate on their work and apply themselves to learning. Eight children show behaviour that is extremely challenging. They attend the school's 'Special Support Centre' in order to help them to overcome their behavioural problems. This facility did not exist until ten months ago and, therefore, the behaviour of these pupils had a detrimental effect on many other pupils' learning. The good provision from the staff in the 'Special Support Centre' ensures that they are well supported in their learning whilst allowing the other pupils in the school the opportunity to learn without interruption. The 'Special Support Centre' is a considerable strength and is an important factor in helping to raise standards in the whole school.
3. Nearly a quarter of pupils in the school come from Traveller family backgrounds and their attendance at school is erratic. They sometimes miss blocks of work and this makes it difficult for them to make gains in their attainment as they move through the school. However, they make satisfactory progress when they attend school regularly. There are 14 per cent of pupils for whom English is an additional language; this is much higher than average. Over half of these pupils are at the earliest stages of learning English. These two groups are supported well in lessons and receive additional help from the Local Education Authority's support services.
4. Overall, all pupils have experienced considerable instability in teaching in the last four years and especially in the last two years. The high turnover of staff and use of temporary teachers have resulted in poor and fragmented learning. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. However, teachers' expectations are not always high enough. The pace and challenge in lessons are too variable which has an impact on standards. Weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills also hamper their overall attainment.
5. Children enter the Nursery at very low levels of attainment. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory for Nursery children and good for those in the Reception group. This is resulting in good overall progress by the time they finish in the Foundation Stage. This includes Traveller children, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The inclusion and support for these children are good. By the end of the Reception Year, a significant number of children are not on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, personal and social development, creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Over half of the children are on course to achieve the expected average in physical development. Overall, their attainment when starting Year 1 is well below average. A few more able pupils are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in all areas.
6. Standards of attainment when starting school at the age of three were noted as considerably low in the last inspection. In particular, HMI commented that many children entered the school with very limited language skills and had considerable difficulty in expressing their thoughts and needs in sentences. The findings of this inspection match those in the previous

report. Achievement in the Nursery is satisfactory, but there is variation in the quality of teaching skills here and this means that the youngest children do not always have the very best learning opportunities. This is because, the Nursery and Reception children are grouped together in one very large group with only one teacher who tends to focus more of her time on the oldest children. In the last HMI report, standards in the Reception class were noted as generally lower than expected, but there was improvement. This inspection finds that there has been good improvement in attainment at the age of five in the last two years, especially for average and more able children and those with English as an additional language. This is largely due to the good teaching from which the oldest children in the Reception class benefit. As a result, all children achieve well from the beginning to the end of their Reception year and most show a keen interest in learning.

7. In the end of Key Stage 1 tests in 2000, the pupils' results were very low in reading, writing and in mathematics, when compared with all schools nationally and when compared with other similar schools. Teachers' assessments in science showed that standards were well below average. Standards in speaking and listening have improved significantly in the last two years, and this reflects the increased emphasis that the school has placed on developing and extending these skills. Standards in mathematics and science are also improving. Trends in performance since 1997 show improvement in reading and writing to 1999, but then a sudden drop. This is because the 2000 year group was very small and had 78 per cent of pupils with special educational needs. In mathematics, standards rose between 1997 and 1998, but then dropped significantly. This is the year group that suffered from continual changes in teachers.

8. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, pupils are attaining standards that are well below average in English, and science. In mathematics, attainment is below average. Standards in English and mathematics show improvement on the 2000 results, but science remains well below average. Speaking and listening skills have improved to below average. Reading and writing skills are well below average, but more able pupils are beginning to develop better work. Achievement for this group of pupils is good in speaking, listening, but only satisfactory in reading and writing. In mathematics, achievement is good from their very low starting point, but expectations of what pupils could achieve are not high enough. In the present Year 2, 66 per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs. Tests taken shortly after they started the Reception class show that their attainment on entry to the school was well below average in almost all aspects of their work. Standards are also well below average in design and technology, geography and history. Standards are below average in information and communication technology, music and religious education. Pupils attain average standards in art and physical education.

9. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are lower than those expected of seven year olds. A few speak clearly and confidently, but many need considerable support in order to be able to express their ideas. Pupils enjoy reading the shared text in the literacy hour and do so with expression. More able pupils tackle new words well but many need prompting and often guess and read unfamiliar words incorrectly. Pupils in Year 2 write short simple stories, but do not use imaginative vocabulary and some writing is difficult to follow. Nonetheless, more able pupils are beginning to choose more interesting words. Pupils achieve much lower than average standards in literacy. In mathematics, pupils work out simple sums but there are weaknesses in pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematics in practical situations. The coverage of shape, space and measurement is too limited. Standards in numeracy are below average. In science, pupils carry out simple investigations and discuss whether they are fair. They explore the effect of force and make simple predictions about what might happen, although they do not talk about this with clarity, unless really pushed to be explicit. Then, pupils use correct scientific vocabulary when describing their investigations.

10. Little work and no direct teaching was seen in information and communication technology in Year 2. Overall, pupils have insufficient skills as they do not have enough 'hands on' learning time. This is very shortly to be resolved with the completion of the new information and communication technology suite. In art, pupils attain satisfactory standards in painting and collage, but their work shows limited progression of skills. In design and technology, pupils have made musical instruments. However, overall, there is insufficient attention to design and limited evaluation of work

in order to improve their ideas. In geography, pupils show some understanding of the differences between living in various locations, such as climate and landscape. In history, they demonstrate some knowledge about the lives of famous people, such as Guy Fawkes, and talk about the passing of time. However, in both geography and history, their learning is unsatisfactory as weaknesses in resources and writing skills limit their progress. More significantly, there is a shortage of time in which to teach the subject in sufficient depth. In music, pupils sing enthusiastically, but have too few opportunities to compose and perform. Pupils do not spend enough time on their music. Furthermore, most teachers lack the skills to teach this with confidence. In physical education, pupils are developing co-ordination and balance effectively. In religious education, pupils have a growing understanding of the beliefs of different faiths, but are held back by the weaknesses in their literacy skills.

11. In the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2000, the pupils' results were well below the national average in English and mathematics and very low in science. When compared with similar schools, the results were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. National data showing the pupils' progress between Year 2 and Year 6 reveal that the pupils' performance was poor. These pupils have experienced great instability in teaching, and considerable behavioural difficulties. These factors had a detrimental effect on their achievements. Standards have remained very similar over the last four years, although there has been significant progress in the number of pupils reaching the average level in science, even though this percentage still remains well below average overall. Based on the figures for the last five years, attainment remains well below average, but there has been improvement in the school's performance that is broadly similar to the national trend. The targets for 2001, for 67 per cent of the pupils to achieve Level 4 in English and 78 per cent in mathematics are very challenging and not on course to be achieved based on the teachers' recent assessment. The school is just beginning to track all pupils' progress very carefully and records show steady progress.

12. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 6, standards are well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. They are similar to the previous year in Year 6. There has been some improvement in the number of pupils working towards average levels of attainment. Standards are also well below average in design and technology due to insufficiently high quality teaching and learning and limited breadth in the curriculum. Attainment in geography and history is also well below average. The poor quality of resources and pupils' limited literacy skills are hampering their learning. Furthermore, there is not enough time allocated to allow the curriculum to be covered fully and in depth. Standards are below average in information and communication technology, music and religious education. There is considerable emphasis on equipping the school to ensure that all aspects of information and communication technology can be taught effectively in the future. Standards are average in art, but skills are not always taught with enough progression and challenge, especially for the more able pupils. Standards in physical education are also average.

13. In Year 6, most pupils continue to have difficulty in expressing themselves, as they do not have the range of vocabulary to discuss their views clearly. A few more able pupils are confident in talking in a range of situations and give thoughtful opinions. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to speak and develop their vocabulary well. Pupils' interest in, and enjoyment of, books are developing, but sometimes there is insufficient challenge in the range of books that they read. Pupils are not confident in discussing characters and events. In Year 6, pupils are gaining more confidence in overcoming their difficulties, due to sensitive teaching and plenty of praise. More able pupils write expressively for a range of purposes. Others do not have the vocabulary to enrich their writing and they find it hard to develop their ideas. Handwriting is too untidy, but pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work. Their understanding of spelling and punctuation is weak. Overall, standards in literacy are well below average and these skills are not used sufficiently to help pupils with other subjects.

14. In mathematics, in Year 6, pupils are developing a range of mental strategies to make calculations. Their written work is not well presented. The National Numeracy Strategy is not sufficiently effective in raising attainment and this is a weakness. Pupils have recently been grouped according to their ability for mathematics teaching. This is not yet having a strong enough impact on

raising their attainment, as work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils. In science, in Year 6, pupils have gaps in their knowledge. They understand about how to make a fair test but have too few opportunities for 'hands on' investigative work. The current organisation of the curriculum is not effective in helping pupils to learn progressively from year to year. They know simple facts about the interdependence of plants and animals. They have a growing knowledge of planets, space, materials and micro organisms and electrical circuits. However, they find it hard to draw conclusions and talk about their experiments.

15. By Year 6, in information and communication technology, the range of learning experiences is too limited and this is having an impact on their attainment. In art, pupils achieve average standards in painting. They have a good knowledge of photography as an art form. Inappropriate and insufficient resources limit pupils' development of drawing skills. In design and technology, pupils have only a very basic grasp of the principles of designing, making and evaluating. In geography, pupils know about environmental issues and have some knowledge about rivers and water. The lack of teaching time and range of work covered restricts learning. In history, pupils are getting the idea of how to be 'time detectives' but they do not have enough opportunities for independent research work. They know about, and can compare, life now with the Victorian age. Pupils in Year 6 have a limited knowledge of music, due to variation in the time allocated to teaching of this subject. Their singing is enthusiastic, but lacks precision. In physical education, pupils can move well, but do not have the drive and confidence to improve their performance. In religious education, pupils show growing understanding of the traditions and celebrations of different faiths and make good use of art to enrich their awareness of symbolism. However, pupils' ability to understand the ways in which different religions have influenced each other and how they affect personal behaviour and responsibility towards each other has not been sufficiently developed.

16. It is important to note that the inspection team compared standards with the most recent inspection report. This was the 1999 OFSTED report by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). However, some subjects were not referred to in that report and, therefore, where this occurred, inspectors have compared their findings with the earlier inspection report of 1997. Improvement is broadly satisfactory, but there is still some considerable way to go before standards are high enough.

17. Compared with the findings of the HMI inspection in 1999, standards are similar in science but lower in English, although there is evidence of further improvement in aspects of these subjects. There is improvement in the standard in mathematics. Standards in art match those of the 1999 inspection. All other subjects relate to the 1997 findings. In geography and history, at both key stages, standards remain below average. They are also the same for music at Key Stage 2, which was also below average. There has been improvement in Key Stage 2 information and communication technology work, which had been poor and is now below average. In design and technology at Key Stages 1 and 2, standards have declined from their earlier average level. Standards were average in music and religious education and information and communication technology at Key Stage 1, but they are now below average compared with 1997. In religious education in Key Stage 2, they have improved from poor to below average. Standards in physical education have remained average at Key Stage 1 and have improved from below average to average at Key Stage 2.

18. This inspection found some differences in standards achieved by girls and boys in English and in science. In mathematics, there were no observed differences in the achievements of boys and girls in lessons or in their class work. However, in the latest tests, boys' attainment was lower than that of girls. The headteacher is very aware of these differences and is beginning to track and monitor pupils' progress. Pupils with English as an additional language often achieved better results than other pupils. Otherwise, the attainment of boys and girls and pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to all other pupils in the school. However, in the year 2000 national tests at Key Stage 1, boys attained lower scores than girls overall. In Key Stage 2, for the same year, boys did better than girls. Since 1998, there have been considerable fluctuations in attainment between boys and girls in English, mathematics and science in both key stages. The headteacher has begun to analyse the results of tests to

determine why these differences exist, but this analysis does not focus sufficiently upon the differences between groups of pupils. The school has no policy or procedures to identify pupils who may be gifted or talented and, therefore, cannot know whether they make appropriate progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. Pupils' relationships with each other and adults and their overall behaviour are good and make an appropriate contribution towards promoting their attainment and progress. Pupils' attitudes and personal development are satisfactory. This conclusion shows an improvement since the last inspection. Parents state that their children enjoy school. Nevertheless, the attendance of the pupils is poor and limits their progress.

20. Throughout the school, the pupils' attitudes towards learning are satisfactory. This includes those of pupils with special educational needs. They are able to concentrate well and show interest in what they are doing, as was seen particularly in a Year 1/2 physical education lesson developing their control when using small equipment. Reception year children listened carefully and appreciatively when finding out about the friends of Jesus. Teachers have established good routines to ensure that pupils settle quickly to group work in lessons and maintain their interest even when not being directly supported by adults in the classroom. An example of this was a Year 3/4 history lesson when studying pictures of the local area as it used to be. Nevertheless, the pace of their work was often slow despite encouragement and they waited for guidance from adults. Many pupils are reluctant to seek equipment they may need and wait for it to be given or to be told by an adult to go and get it.

21. The great majority of pupils behave very well in the classroom, at play and lunch times. This shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. They are open, well mannered, polite to adults and to each other, and eager to speak to visitors. They move around the school in an orderly way although they do sometimes run when not directly supervised. In particular, they wait patiently for other classes when going to and from their rooms at the beginning and end of the day and for assemblies. Some ten to 14 pupils, based in the "Special Support Centre", sometimes find it very difficult to settle, and chat to classmates or wander round the room. However, they respond well to the calm, reassuring manner of the teacher and good examples were seen during the inspection in, for example, geography and design and technology lessons of the pupils working quietly and with concentration. Pupils stated that there are occasional instances of bullying but agreed that the school takes quick and effective action to deal with it. Last year, there were a large number of exclusions of pupils showing extremely poor behaviour. Since then, the numbers of exclusions have dropped significantly due to the effectiveness of the school's initiatives to support such pupils.

22. Relationships between pupils and with adults are good and contribute to the quality of work in lessons. Pupils get on well with each other when playing games at break and lunch times. In the classroom, even the youngest in the Nursery respect each other's space when sitting close together on the carpet and they generally do not grab toys from each other. Year 4/5 pupils worked co-operatively, and were generous in the way they shared resources when planning how to improve a local area during a geography lesson. They generally take turns and put up their hands to answer questions although a number of them still call out or chat inappropriately when, for example, one of their classmates is writing on the white board. The school's emphasis on building up the pupils' self-esteem leads to very positive relationships and helps to motivate the pupils. This was noticeable, for example, in a Year 5/6 science lesson showing how animals and plants are interdependent. In a Year 4/5 lesson, the boys were embarrassed when learning to do a jazz turn in line dancing, but they still secretly wanted to do well, and continually watched the teacher to get the right sequence of moves. Boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together very well when doing group work in the classroom and when playing at break and lunch times.

23. Overall the pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The school provides a variety of opportunities to take on responsibility in the class and around the school. Pupils were seen to act very responsibly and are obviously pleased to be allowed to undertake the different tasks. They are especially pleased with, and value, the badges that show what their duties are. The representatives on the school council talk with maturity about the way they were elected and the various discussions that they have had. Children in the Nursery are willing and able to get toys and equipment when encouraged to do so. Nevertheless, throughout the school, the opportunities for pupils to use their initiative are limited. The teachers direct much of the work and, when working by themselves, pupils have not learned how to try out different ideas when waiting for help.

24. Attendance is poor. Last year, the level of attendance was well below the national average but had improved over the previous year. However, this year, it has become worse and is now below 91 per cent. In part, this is due to a few pupils with very high levels of absence, although approximately a quarter of pupils are absent for more than six weeks each year. Pupils from traveller families have an especially high level of absence with a disproportionate number being absent for six weeks or more in a year. These high levels of absence not only affect the attainment of individual pupils but other pupils are affected, as the teacher has to repeat work to help the absentee catch up. Absences are mainly due to the usual childhood illnesses, although a number of parents insist on taking their children on holiday in term time. Some of these holidays are longer than two weeks. The level of unauthorised absences, at over four per cent for this year, is exceptionally high, in part reflecting the difficulty the school has in obtaining an explanation from some parents. Most pupils are keen to come to school but a third have been late several times during the year. Late arrivals delay the start of the day resulting in a loss of teaching time for all pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching is stronger overall than learning. When the school was last inspected by HMI in 1999, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 15 out of the 18 lessons seen and good in four. This shows that nearly 17 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. There has been good improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school over the past two years as there was no unsatisfactory teaching in lessons seen during this inspection. Furthermore, the percentage of good teaching has increased from 22 per cent to 42 per cent. Moreover, there was very good teaching in two lessons, one at each key stage. This is equal to four per cent of the lessons seen. Teaching was stronger at the upper end of Key Stage 2. Due to unforeseen circumstances, their usual teacher did not directly teach the pupils in the mixed Year 1/2 class. Pupils have experienced many changes in teachers and this has resulted in gaps in their learning.

26. In judging teaching and learning, the inspection team examined pupils' work and teachers' planning and talked to pupils and teachers about teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science, art and religious education. However, the work sampling indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in design and technology. This is due to pupils' limited grasp of the principles of design, making and evaluating. The limited range, depth and amount of work are unsatisfactory and are having an impact on pupils' learning. In music, there is insufficient teaching and learning. The school has appointed a new co-ordinator for music from September but, currently, pupils do not do enough music and this is resulting in unsatisfactory learning. Most class teachers are not confident or skilled in teaching music and the school does not have a scheme of work to help them to teach this more effectively. In information and communication technology, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory at Key Stage 1, because pupils do not do enough of this work. At Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory in the few lessons seen; nevertheless, it is unsatisfactory overall. It is limited by the number of available computers and the narrow range of experiences. In geography and history, teaching is satisfactory, but learning is unsatisfactory. This is because there are insufficient resources for the subject and limited teaching time means that subjects are not covered in depth. Furthermore, weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills hamper learning. In physical education, teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2.

27. In the 1999 inspection, it was reported that, in a minority of lessons, pupils had no sense of urgency and teachers did not always address this sufficiently. This feature still remains in a few lessons. In mathematics, for example the pace of lessons is sometimes too relaxed. In the mixed Year3/4 class, the teacher has worked very hard to bring a formerly totally unmanageable class into order. This is a result of patience, praise and encouragement. Nevertheless, sometimes, these pupils do not work at a fast enough pace. It is worthy of note that this group has had seven teachers in the last three years so that they feel insecure about giving of their best. All pupils are gradually showing a better attitude to learning as they value the teachers' commitment to them. The deputy headteacher and upper Key Stage 2 teachers are skilled at bringing learning to life and this helps to inspire pupils to work more quickly. For example, in a very good science lesson, the Year 5/6 teacher was very encouraging: "Come on you guys, now really think about this, what does this poor little insect depend upon for life?" Her style of presentation was energetic; she smiled and praised the pupils for their efforts. "Come on, let's try harder, I need to know more, let's be more specific." The pupils were quick to raise their hands to suggest ideas. Inspiring teaching was also seen in a habitats lesson in Year 4/5. This good teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2 is resulting in pupils who are more motivated to learn and keen to try things out for themselves.

28. The key issue from the last HMI report identified the need to improve further the quality of teaching. Overall, this part has been addressed well. HMI also noted the need to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils could and should achieve. This is developing steadily as teachers feel more secure that pupils' behaviour is good. However, there are still weaknesses in the challenge and teachers' expectation of what pupils can and should do. The quality of presentation is not high enough in English and mathematics in particular. More able pupils are not often given sufficiently demanding work to challenge and extend them and this is unsatisfactory. Pupils' interest, concentration and independence are satisfactory. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Stage and at both key stages to initiate and research things for themselves. The lack of helpful assessment systems at Key Stages 1 and 2 is making it difficult for teachers to plan really challenging work that is specifically matched to pupils' level of understanding. Co-ordinators have not had the opportunity to monitor this as stated by HMI. So far, pupils have acquired knowledge, skills and understanding at a slower pace than expected at Key Stages 1 and 2, but this is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Pupils show satisfactory intellectual, physical and creative effort in their work.

29. The National Literacy Strategy is being implemented satisfactorily and is well supported by the 'Literacy goes MADD' and the additional literacy programme. Nonetheless, there are too few opportunities to use literacy skills in other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy is not having enough impact on raising standards in mathematics. This is because the way in which teachers plan and teach the lessons lacks the precision and detail of the national format. For example, in a good Year 4/5 lesson on classifying shapes, the National Numeracy Strategy was not in use. Hence, pupils did not do rigorous and challenging mental calculations at the beginning of the lesson. Nevertheless, they made good progress in naming shapes, although they found it difficult to describe the properties of different triangles, despite the good questioning by the teacher and good use of resources to aid learning. There are weaknesses in curricular planning that are having an impact upon teaching and learning. The good relationships that teachers have with pupils help to create a secure, calm and caring environment for learning. The marking of pupils' work is variable. Some is very constructive and shows pupils clearly how to improve their work, whilst some is less helpful. There are examples in work in mathematics of no marking and this is unsatisfactory.

30. In the Foundation Stage, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good for the nine children in the Reception group and broadly satisfactory for the Nursery group. These children are all clustered together and are taught by one teacher and two assistants. In addition, an inexperienced part time student helps as part of the first phase of her training course. This is a very large group for one teacher, especially as her assistants do not have any specialist training for this age group.

31. There are several reasons why the provision for the Reception and Nursery is variable. It is better for the Reception group because these older children benefit from having an additional half an hour in the morning, before lunch and then the whole of the afternoon session to themselves. This is because the Nursery children only attend until 11.30am. Therefore, this

means that much of the teaching is really focused on individual needs, which results in good learning. For example, when reading in small groups, children benefit from very intensive teaching of initial letter sounds as they try to read new words. Moreover, because there are so few children, they read on a one to one basis every day in addition to their group reading activities. The teachers' and assistants' knowledge of how to interact with young children to aid their learning ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Sometimes, they do not observe and respond appropriately to children while they are engaged in playing. This is because they are not all clear about how children develop and thus they do not ask questions, which lead to the next steps in their development. A lot of time is spent listening and talking to the teacher on the carpet. This is satisfactory for the Reception pupils but, on occasions, this is too much for the youngest children who behave well, but are often passive. Intervention by adults in children's play is too variable and this results in some missed opportunities to promote the best learning. Younger children do not initiate enough activities for themselves.

32. Throughout the school, teachers' planning is satisfactory and often very detailed. This shows clear objectives that pupils generally understand, but there is not always sufficient regard given to the match of work to pupils' needs. This is particularly so in the grouping for mathematics recently introduced by the school. There is too little use of information and communication technology, mostly because the computer suite is not yet in use. However, the computers that are located in each class are currently under used. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of subjects are satisfactory overall, although weaker in music and design and technology. In Years 4 to 6, teachers show good subject knowledge and this is having an impact on improving standards. Teaching methods are satisfactory, but the organisation of the mixed age group classes is not giving equal opportunities to all pupils. Furthermore, the challenge for different year groups is not often evident in teachers' lesson planning. This means that work from year to year is not always challenging enough. This is especially noticeable in work in science. Across the school, teachers are sometimes reluctant to step up the pace of learning in case this has a negative impact upon pupils' behaviour. The management and behaviour of pupils are now good. As a result, expectations for presentation and greater challenges in pupils' learning are not high enough.

33. The quality and use of homework are broadly satisfactory and support learning in English and mathematics. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to find things out at home for other subjects. This is good practice. Parents are generally happy with this. At the parents' meeting it was suggested that parents would like guidance on how to help their children with work in mathematics. The inspection team agrees that this would be a helpful step in involving parents more in their children's learning.

34. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The focus upon good behaviour ensures that all pupils have good opportunities to learn. Specialist teachers are involved in the identification of the particular needs that pupils have. They then give advice and guidance to teachers so that these pupils have appropriate teaching. Class teachers and learning support assistants have access to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs. This enables them to plan appropriate learning activities. Good liaison has been created between teachers and learning support assistants by regular discussion and simple, but effective, recording of pupils' progress. However, in some lessons, particularly where pupils in different years are grouped together, there is too little regard given to match pupils' work to their particular needs. As teaching and learning support is generally well organised, pupils understand what they are meant to do. However, a weakness in some lessons is that learning support assistants do little in whole class teaching, except watch and listen. Teaching and support in the 'Special Support Centre' are of good quality and are characterised by a calm approach balanced by high expectations of what pupils should achieve.

35. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with English as an additional language is good overall. They are well supported in classes and encouraged to develop their speaking skills. The Local Education Authority provides additional teaching support that helps pupils to make good gains in their learning. The school is developing resources to support their work.

36. Traveller pupils are well supported in the school. They learn best when they attend regularly. In some instances, they need considerable help to see themselves as successful learners. Teachers have to work hard to help a few of these pupils to show a positive attitude to learning. Most pupils are trying hard to improve. Those who are supported in the 'Special Support Centre' have made good recent progress in improving their attitudes and behaviour. One boy commented: "I didn't like school before, but now that I can go to the Centre it's OK."

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

37. At the time of the 1999 inspection, it was reported that teachers planned well in key stage teams to ensure curricular coverage. The curriculum was carefully planned to meet the diverse needs of all pupils. Since then, there have been numerous changes to the curriculum and its organisation. The school has worked hard in recent months to organise a workable curriculum, although this is still underdeveloped. Statutory requirements are not fully met in information and control technology, design and technology and in aspects of music.

38. Children in the Foundation Stage have a relevant and interesting range of experiences. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory although the planning of work shows a stronger emphasis on the needs of the older pupils. For example, the day is organised into a formalised timetable of lessons and does not have enough flexibility to give the youngest children the security of a daily routine, whilst also providing numerous opportunities for spontaneous play and learning. For example, they do not have the opportunity to become quickly involved in activities at the start of the day. As a result, younger children do not have enough time to become engrossed in a range of activities. Overall, the class teacher is giving more of her time to the older children in the morning while the younger ones are often supported by unqualified assistants. There is a satisfactory balance between learning inside and outside the classrooms.

39. Learning opportunities for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are unsatisfactory and do not promote the aims of the school effectively. Statutory requirements are not met in information and communication technology, design and technology, aspects of music and in the provision for swimming in physical education. Religious education is taught satisfactorily according to the locally agreed syllabus and the daily act of collective worship conforms to requirements. Although total teaching time appears adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum, time allocations are not always appropriate. The school's intensive focus on speaking and listening has led to a reduction of teaching time in other areas of the curriculum, for example, in geography and history. The management and monitoring of curricular time are unsatisfactory and do not ensure depth of coverage in order to raise attainment and equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. As a result, the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are unsatisfactory.

40. The use of information and communication technology in different subjects is not developed sufficiently to match the demands of the National Curriculum. The school places a high emphasis upon a curriculum that develops cooperative attitudes among pupils so that learning can be effective; this is particularly exemplified in the "Special Support Centre". There is a good awareness of the cultural backgrounds of pupils and the school strives to celebrate them, for example, by a specific focus upon the life style of Travellers. In addition, there is a determination to increase awareness of cultural differences through personal and social education lessons. A very good range of extra curricular activities is open to all pupils.

41. The headteacher and co-ordinators monitor the curriculum carefully through a scrutiny of teachers' planning. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, schemes of work incorporating national guidelines from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority enable teachers to plan their work within a whole school framework and to build on pupils' previous learning. The school is still adapting them to meet the particular needs of its pupils. Monitoring of the curriculum for the mixed age classes is not rigorous enough to ensure that skills are

being developed progressively, that it is challenging enough for older pupils and that the learning needs of pupils of different ages and wide ranging abilities are being met.

42. The school places great emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics because of its awareness of the importance of raising standards in these subjects. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented satisfactorily and teachers show a degree of confidence in handling it. The recent focus on oral and listening skills has had a significant impact on raising standards in this aspect especially at Key Stage 1. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is unsatisfactory. The format of the strategy has not been established effectively. Where three age groups are clustered together in mathematics sets, the organisation is not having the best effect on learning. The use of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory as there is insufficient focus on these in some subjects, for example, history, geography and religious education. This is compounded by the use of undemanding worksheets that limit the style, quality and quantity of pupils' work.

43. A small number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were not satisfied with the variety of activities offered to pupils outside lessons. The findings of the inspection are that the school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities including art and craft, music and movement, netball and 'On the Edge' social club. Parents, teachers and church helpers run these activities. The curriculum is also enriched by musical, dance and drama workshops and theatre trips as well as by a number of visitors to the school and visits to places of educational interest. Visitors such as a professional drummer, international gymnast, artist in residence and a Romany exhibition and trips to the coast, the Millennium Dome and St Aidan's Church are important and regular features of the curriculum.

44. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are of good quality because they are clear and detailed, but, because of changes of staff, not all progress reviews are fully completed. Most learning support takes place in classes and this is appropriate because of the need to minimise the disruption to lessons that withdrawal could cause. The 'Special Support Centre' has a specific approach to the curriculum that is successful in developing the self-esteem of its pupils so that they can achieve success in learning.

45. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education that is importantly linked with raising pupils' self esteem. Relevant issues, such as the maintenance of a healthy diet and life style, attention to the dangers of drug abuse and personal safety, are discussed sensitively in 'circle time' and in appropriate lessons. 'Circle time' allows pupils to learn to relate to others and to share their experiences and concerns within a secure, supportive environment. The school nurse runs a course on sex education for older pupils. Other visitors, such as the Life Education Caravan, police, firefighters and a theatre company highlighting bullying, make useful contributions.

46. There are sound links with the wider community that contribute effectively to pupils' experience and provide them with opportunities to develop their awareness of citizenship. There are strong links with St Aidan's where pupils attended the Easter celebration, the Chalk Pentecostal Church, Science of the Soul, Key Skills training, Westcourt Residents' Group and Gravesham Parents' and Carers' group. Pupils learn to consider the needs of others when they take part in a Christmas tea party for the elderly. Good relationships with partner schools, including secondary pupils on work experience, help to ease the transition for pupils from one stage of education to another. The school also works closely with other local schools in a consortium and draws on it productively for examples of best practice in teaching.

47. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and it makes good provision for their cultural development. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. This is a strength of the school and is an improvement on the findings at the time of the previous inspection.

48. The opportunities for pupils to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness are satisfactory. As well as providing time for reflection, school assemblies help pupils to gain a sense of belonging to a whole school community and, each week, to celebrate the contributions and achievements of others. During an assembly in the week of the inspection, the pupils were obviously moved by the clarity of sound from bell ringers playing 'Amazing Grace'. Visitors from local churches and opportunities to go to the nearby church enable pupils to develop an understanding of Christian worship. 'Circle time' helps pupils to start to appreciate their own worth and to raise their self-esteem. Year 4 and 5 pupils exploring the habitats of mini-beasts in the school grounds were suitably excited as they discovered different insects. Nevertheless, the school does not always plan opportunities within lessons, such as art, music or science, to enable pupils to appreciate fully the exciting nature of the world around them or to reflect upon their own feelings.

49. The school's approach to pupils' moral development is very good. The school stands for positive values and there are clear expectations of high standards of behaviour and acceptable conduct to which the pupils generally respond. These standards are expressed in the 'Westcourt Way', a moral code that leads to the pupils having a good awareness of right and wrong. The great majority of pupils are self disciplined and this makes for an orderly school. The staff are good role models and the overall positive approach of the school towards encouraging pupils' moral development is evident in the way that all adults show tolerance and patience when dealing with pupils with difficulties. The provision for personal and social education has developed well. Opportunities are taken consistently in assemblies, 'circle time' and lessons to deal with problems and concerns.

50. The provision for encouraging the social development of the pupils is very good. The school values its members and encourages pupils to integrate well both at work and at play. This approach results in very positive relationships between pupils themselves and between pupils and staff. In the classroom, there are many opportunities to work together in pairs or groups, although, of course, the youngest pupils are often only just starting to develop their social skills. Pupils are encouraged, and are willing, to undertake various tasks appropriate to their age, such as getting resources and tidying up at the end of the lessons. Many pupils have duties around the school, such as washing up, preparing the hall for assembly and helping at lunch times. The school council provides opportunities to discuss concerns with adults and other pupils of different ages. 'Circle time' effectively reinforces good social values.

51. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils are starting to appreciate the western cultural background from nursery rhymes and stories and work on, for example, the Romans and Tudors in history. Storytellers, photographs and work in design and technology on making wagons develop awareness of the Travellers' culture. This has been enhanced by, for example, a traveller parent helping the pupils to make holly wreaths at Christmas to display around the school. Painting and music develop aesthetic awareness, although this is insufficiently developed. The comparison of breads from around the world is one example of making pupils aware of a range of cultures. Nevertheless, opportunities to help pupils to be aware of the very many different aspects of multi-cultural British society are underdeveloped.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. Staff show appropriate concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage their development. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where staff are approachable if there are any problems. Nevertheless, the procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are poor.

53. Overall, the school has good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of the pupils. The headteacher is the designated officer for child protection and the school follows local procedures. The teaching staff and midday supervisors have received

guidance on how to deal with any situations that may arise and know to whom they should report in the school if necessary. The school is arranging guidance for other staff. The provision for first aid is good with several trained staff, records kept of any treatment and letters home to parents as appropriate. An independent consultant carried out a thorough health and safety risk assessment recently and the school is dealing with the few recommendations that were made. Outside contractors regularly check the fire extinguishers and electrical equipment. The teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science, physical education and design and technology.

54. The monitoring of progress of pupils' personal development is less structured and relies mainly on the teachers' and teaching assistants' knowledge of the individual pupils. Few records are kept but otherwise the school's approach to enhancing the pupils' personal qualities is very good. The major emphasis within the school is on raising the self-esteem of the pupils. Within the classroom, they have responsibilities for tidying, giving out books and putting away equipment. Outside the classroom, pupils of all ages are monitors for the library, dining room and watering plants. The pupils are trusted and were seen to do these jobs sensibly without being directly supervised. In addition, each class elects representatives for the school council, which meets regularly to discuss matters affecting the pupils, such as playground equipment. The wide range of clubs and other after school activities provides opportunities for pupils to work together in a less formal setting. The school encourages pupils to recognise the value of good work and effort with stickers, certificates and the recognition of 'Gallery Stars' at the weekly celebration assembly. 'Circle time' helps pupils to learn to listen to others and to be tolerant of other points of view.

55. The school has good procedures to identify those pupils who have special educational needs. The recently appointed co-ordinator has now computerised most records and individual education plans so that all documentation is clear to staff. She has also given guidance to newly qualified teachers so that they know how to assess the needs of pupils. Individual education plans have realistic targets and appropriate teaching strategies to meet them are listed. A specialist teacher provides very effective intervention for the identification and support of pupils' learning needs.

56. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. The school's approach is highlighted in the 'Westcourt Way' on display around the classrooms, emphasising being gentle, kind, honest and other helpful qualities. The behaviour policy has a good balance of rewards and consequences but the highlight is the strategies for staff for supporting pupils. The teachers and classroom assistants follow a consistent approach in the way that they deal with pupils, reminding them of what is expected and praising good behaviour. The playground and lunchtime supervisors are also becoming more involved. They have had guidance on how to support the pupils and, for example, are able to award certificates for good behaviour. A major feature of the school is the "Special Support Centre" it has set up. This enables a teacher and support assistants in a small class setting to teach those pupils who have difficulty behaving well. The inspectors saw good instances in lessons of teachers ensuring that the pupils understood how to behave. Nevertheless, in some classes, the teachers did not, for example, always insist on pupils putting their hands up and they were allowed to continue to call out. There are occasional instances of bullying or name calling but the school takes immediate action if any occurs.

57. Overall the procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The school's approach has some good features. Any unexplained absence results in the secretary telephoning home during the morning of the first day. She also produces running totals of the amount of absence of each pupil to identify those who need to be followed up. Good attendance is rewarded with a shield for the best class each week and with certificates for pupils with good attendance each term. One effective initiative to improve punctuality has been the breakfast club where 20, and often more, pupils arrive early to enjoy the opportunity to have food and drink and socialise with their friends. The education welfare officer comes to the school each week and visits some parents at home. However, no targets

have been set for improvement. The lack of regular statistical monitoring prevents the school from becoming aware of how serious the problem is and limits identification of the need to give special attention to particular classes or groups of pupils. Attendance levels have been consistently well below the national average for several years.

58. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from being in a happy and caring working environment, where they feel valued and secure. These are factors in protecting children against early failure and low self-esteem. This is a real strength of the Foundation Stage provision; moreover, it shows a strong link with the school's aims. Assessment systems are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop an effective approach to identifying what children know and can do when they start in the Nursery. This is good overall, but weaker for mathematics as she has not identified the very earliest skills for mathematical development. She has organised a satisfactory daily assessment system for the assistants to use when working with groups but this often end up as a tick list rather than containing informal observations about how the children approached and managed the activities. Thus it makes it difficult to use this to best advantage when planning the next sequence of work for groups of children. There is good use of testing at the end of the Foundation Stage to see how children have progressed since starting.

59. Overall, the school's procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are poor and are in the early stages of development. The previous inspection reported that there was 'good work on assessing levels of attainment although it is an area of continued development to give continuity across the school'. The school has not continued its good progress on this key issue. In Key Stages 1 and 2, assessment procedures in English and mathematics are satisfactory but they are weaker in science. There is no systematic whole school approach to assessment in other subjects and it relies too heavily on the recording methods of individual teachers. The pattern of day-to-day assessment is inconsistent across the school. In some classes, there is sound ongoing oral assessment but there is insufficient recording of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses within the lesson.

60. The use of assessment information to inform teachers' planning is poor. The procedures in place are not rigorous enough to have a significant and consistent effect on the way in which the teachers plan the curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils in mixed age group classes.

61. Information from national test results, optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 and from other assessments is not being use well enough to raise standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Analysis of test data has been carried out and, in writing, it has led the school to identify weaker areas and those that require further emphasis. Teachers also regularly analyse a sample of pupils' work, for example, in English, they determine and agree the levels attained. The computerised tracking system is designed to provide an exact profile of pupils' progress in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school. However, it is very new and its use for monitoring is underdeveloped. For example, for tracking the performance of different groups of pupils such as minority ethnic groups and traveller pupils. Differences in the test results of boys and girls are yet to be explained. The quality of marking is variable: some consists simply of ticks and, often, mediocre work is over praised whilst some challenges pupils to correct their work and extend their ideas.

62. Pupils' self evaluation and target setting for English, mathematics and behaviour are good initiatives which encourage responsibility for their own learning. The particular needs of pupils in the 'Special Support Centre' are carefully assessed and this information is used to help them develop acceptable attitudes to both social relationships and learning. There are no procedures for identifying and assessing the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. In their responses to the questionnaire, at the meeting and in discussions with the inspectors, parents showed that they are generally pleased with all that the school does. The

inspection team supports many of their positive comments. Parents say that the school is well led, the teaching is good, their children like coming to school and make progress from the level of support they receive. The school expects them to work hard and helps them to become mature and responsible. The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable approaching the school with any questions. Some parents are concerned about the range of activities outside lessons but the inspection team considers that the provision of clubs and activities at lunchtime and at other times is very good especially for a school of this size. A few parents were also dissatisfied with the level of behaviour in the school. The inspection team noted that the behaviour of the great majority of pupils is very good and the school has good procedures to support other pupils so that the learning of others is not affected. Some doubts were expressed about the amount of homework but the inspectors concluded that the homework set is generally appropriate although there is some variation between classes.

64. Overall, the school has established satisfactory links with the parents and these contacts are effective. The headteacher regularly sends home newsletters outlining the various activities that the pupils are involved in as well as providing general administrative information. Other letters refer to more specific matters. Every afternoon provides a very good opportunity for parents to see the teachers. The inspectors saw several conversations taking place in the playground or parents readily going into the classrooms. It is very apparent that parents feel welcome to talk to the teachers. The school holds formal meetings with teachers in the autumn and spring terms for parents to discuss their children's progress and the school holds an open day each year. Some parents rarely take advantage of these opportunities to come into the school. Written information on progress includes certificates and stickers that the staff award to the pupils. The newsletters list pupils who are 'gallery stars' at the weekly celebratory assembly. The school generally provides little information on what is being taught in the classroom either in writing or by holding curriculum evenings. Pupils' annual reports on progress are sent home in the summer term. The quality of these shows considerable variation between classes. Some provide a reasonable summary of what the pupils know and can do together with targets to help the pupils to improve. However, in others, they are very brief and concentrate on the work covered or attitudes rather than the skills and understanding acquired.

65. The level of parental involvement has deteriorated since the 1997 inspection and is now having an unsatisfactory impact on the work of the school. The school tries to encourage parents to help in school. Nevertheless, only a few are prepared to come into the classroom and work with the pupils hearing readers and supporting lessons. More are willing to help on trips out, but some ten or 12 parents like to come into school before the start of the day to have breakfast with their children. There is no parents' association but they support the many fund raising events that have to be organised by the staff. The school supplies contact books as a means of communication with parents but few respond with any comments.

66. In the Foundation Stage, links with parents and carers are satisfactory. There is regular daily contact. There are plenty of informal visits by the children to the school before they start. Some parents and carers listen to their child read, but overall, this is underdeveloped. The school has produced some helpful special information about the Foundation Stage, which is available for parents to look at.

67. The school prospectus gives clear information about provision for pupils with special educational needs. Parents are involved with the school in most of the aspects that affect their children, but some expressed the view, before the inspection, that they would value earlier participation. Parents are not always fully involved in the reviews of the progress that their children make.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The quality of leadership and management in the school is satisfactory. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The school is working satisfactorily towards achieving all of the aims as detailed in the school's prospectus, although not all pupils are achieving their full

potential. Progress since the last inspection by HMI in 1999 is good and shows further determination to improve standards as noted in 1999.

69. Very good leadership from the new headteacher underpins the very recent developments in the school. She came to the school in an acting capacity when the former headteacher left in April 2000. The current headteacher led the school in an acting capacity for two terms and was then appointed permanently in January 2001. She has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school had been removed from 'Special Measures' in the summer of 1999. Following this, the school faced major staffing difficulties as almost all staff left resulting in tremendous instability in 1999. The behaviour problems had worsened and, although these were caused by a minority of pupils, this had a negative effect on all pupils. Moreover, pupils felt insecure as they moved from one temporary teacher to the next. The current headteacher decided to stay and support these very needy pupils beyond her temporary appointment. Her care and respect for them and their families have helped them to begin to take a pride in their own achievements. This is resulting in improved self-esteem and growing success in learning.

70. The headteacher's vision for development is very good. She is giving a very firm steer to school development. She leads by example by taking on a heavy teaching timetable for mathematics to raise attainment. Her style of management shows respect for the contributions that all staff can make to school improvement. In the last year, she has appointed six new and permanent staff, the latest of whom was the new deputy headteacher who took up her post six weeks before the inspection. They share a common purpose by putting the pupils first. The support for new staff is good.

71. Delegation of responsibilities to the senior management team and subject co-ordinators is good. This is a small staff, which means that each teacher is responsible for several subjects. Teamwork is evident throughout the school and this is a significant reason why the planned improvements are being implemented quickly and successfully. This includes governors, assistants, administrative staff, kitchen staff, cleaners and the premises manager. Overall, commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed are very good.

72. The governing body gives satisfactory leadership and management. The Chair of Governors has shown a strong commitment to the school. She supported /the development of the very successful 'Breakfast Club' so that the school could play a part in the wider regeneration of the local community. Governors are working effectively to develop their role by improving their monitoring role and developing their skills by attending training. Parents do not play an active part in the governing body and this is a weakness. Governors visit the school as often as their work commitments allow and this enables them to develop a satisfactory knowledge of its daily workings. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is not completely fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. There are weaknesses in provision of the curriculum and in the governors' Annual Report, which has several omissions.

73. Subject co-ordinators show satisfactory leadership and management, as they have not had very much time to develop their new roles. As yet, they have not written specific subject development plans, but have fed their ideas into the one year plan. Long term planning is unsatisfactory. Co-ordinators understand this weakness and see that the budget for resource development and improvement of standards cannot be achieved without careful planning.

74. Overall, the leadership by the co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Her vision for leadership is good but most aspects of management are satisfactory. The range and quantity of resources show good recent development, but overall, there are still too few for most areas of learning. However, the recent progress in developing them and the whole Foundation Stage learning environment and the curriculum is good overall. She has a clear plan and very good vision for development, but this is not formally written down as a longer term plan. The organisation of resources is developing satisfactorily overall, but some are not easily accessible to children.

75. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is already showing good leadership in her newly appointed position. She is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and has begun a systematic restructuring of the provision. Good liaison between the co-ordinator and teachers is having a positive effect on pupils' progress. The school improvement plan has a very clear focus upon special educational needs and its development. Governors take a keen interest in the provision, but because the school does not sufficiently analyse trends in the attainment of pupils, they do not have enough information to help them decide how successful is the policy for special educational needs. The governors' Annual Report to parents does not clearly indicate whether or not there are any changes to the policy. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in provision.

76. There is a long list of school development projects which have been carefully prioritised, and give due attention to improving standards. The one year written development plan is very good. However, there is no written long term plan beyond this, which is unsatisfactory. This was also noted as a key issue at the time of the last inspection. However, the reasons for this result from the continual changes in staffing.

77. Overall progress on the former key issues for action and other aspects since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching and learning is improving, although there are still weaknesses in the curriculum and in teachers' expectations of what some pupils can do. The school has been successful in raising attainment in aspects of English, mathematics and science. There has been significant progress in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Progress in developing information and communication technology is satisfactory as the new suite is nearly complete, but this has not yet been used by pupils to improve their skills. Progress on further developing assessment and attendance is limited. First aid and health and safety procedures show good progress.

78. A major strength of the school is the very good improvement in pupils' behaviour. Behaviour in the school as a whole is now good and monitoring is excellent. There has been very good improvement in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

79. The introduction of the 'Special Support Centre' by the current headteacher was an excellent decision. This has resulted in many positive features, which are helping to lay the foundations for improved results in the future. Pupils with extreme emotional and behavioural problems are given space and support from a very caring and calm team of staff away from the rest of their class. This means that their outbursts no longer ruin other pupils' learning and concentration. Staff see this provision as an essential part in supporting the school's and pupils' future development. Furthermore, the inspection team fully agree with this.

80. Financing for the 'Special Support Centre' is having a significant impact on the school's budget. Initially, the Local Education Authority offered the finance to establish the unit, but the money has not yet been allocated for this year. The headteacher and governors have been very active in trying to obtain the necessary funding and to find out why the finances cannot be allocated. As a direct result of this, the school has set a budget with a very high overspend (eight per cent) in order to keep the 'Special Support Centre' open. This is a very unsatisfactory situation, as the school cannot sustain this pattern of spending. Moreover, this is a considerable weakness of financial management as there is no formalised written plan of action in place to balance the budget if the funding is not provided. This is, however, an essential and critical resource for disaffected pupils. For example, the number of exclusions has plummeted since the unit was opened. In the meeting with the parents, they could not speak more highly of the beneficial effect that the 'Special Support Centre' has on the whole school.

81. In other respects, there has been satisfactory progress in improving financial control, which was noted as a weakness at the time of the last inspection. The current chair of finance has a very clear understanding of the school's financial position. Targets for school development are carefully linked to priorities in the budget plan. Recommendations from the recent audit have been acted upon satisfactorily. The school secretary is efficient and

knowledgeable and gives good support to the workings of the school. The budget is controlled and monitored satisfactorily by an effective and well-informed financial assistant, but her job is made difficult, as the current budget has not been agreed at County level.

82. Overall, the use of specific grants and other funding is satisfactory. The special additional grants for developing information and communication technology and support for Traveller pupils are used well. There is a minor inconsistency in the way in which the grant for English as an additional language support operates. Usually, specialist teaching is directly focused on these pupils. However, if any pupils are away, other pupils in the class benefit from the help rather than the support teacher giving extra help to other pupils with English as an additional language elsewhere in the school. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of how to plan and monitor spending to obtain best value for money.

83. The decision to employ more teaching assistants is good. They give good support as their work is resulting in improvement in pupils' ability to behave, concentrate and develop spoken language skills and read with better understanding. In this respect, the very high spending on this resource is good, as it is having a positive impact on improving standards. In the Foundation Stage, they help to foster a caring and happy ethos, but do not have adequate training for the specific needs of these children. Assistants are keen to develop their professional skills. However, current variation in their skills makes it very difficult for the Foundation Stage teacher to plan effectively for the wide ages in this class. The number of children in the Nursery group is very high for the number of full time and qualified staff, especially as they share the teacher with the Reception group. Overall, the number of staff and their qualifications are satisfactory.

84. The arrangements for staff development, appraisal and performance management are satisfactory. Monitoring is developing. The school takes effective action to address issues, which arise from monitoring. The Local Education Authority is giving good support to monitoring teaching and whole school development. The headteacher and senior staff are monitoring behaviour as their top priority. Until recently, it was almost impossible to monitor teaching as the headteacher had no coordinator for special educational needs and no deputy headteacher to help with this. Every teacher has been monitored as part of performance management. Sampling of pupils' work, and evaluation of continuity between different year groups are not carried out enough. Currently, no co-ordinator has had the chance to monitor the direct teaching of their subjects. The monitoring of test results in English, mathematics and science is good. The school is just beginning to track individual pupils' achievements in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics as they move from class to class. However, analysis of the achievements of groups of pupils such as ethnic minorities and pupils with English as an additional language, have not been introduced.

85. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, new policies to ensure inclusion of all pupils have been developed, but it is too soon to monitor their effectiveness. The headteacher has identified a good range of priorities for the promotion of equal opportunities. Specialist teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator work hard to identify the particular needs of pupils and manage appropriate provision for them.

86. The site manager and cleaning staff look after the accommodation well. There is a very good ongoing programme of re-decoration. The school benefits from very spacious accommodation. As you walk into the school it appears attractive, calm and inviting. The outside accommodation is developing satisfactorily. The internal improvements to the Foundation Stage are good. However, they do not have their own fenced play area. Furthermore, although they have plenty of outside play space, they do not have enough resources to support their learning. The school is in the process of finishing a very good information and communication technology suite. However, the school is not making effective use of new technology and in the office, it is not being used to monitor school attendance. Resources are unsatisfactory, although they are improving. Last year, the school spent a higher than average sum on improving them as many had been broken or lost in the past.

87. Very good leadership by the headteacher with strong support for other staff and governors is creating an effective and improving school. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes, good relationships and behaviour and there is respect and good overall inclusion for all pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

88. The headteacher, governors and staff should build on the good recent progress to:

1. Improve standards where they are below average by:

- building on the good plans which already exist in the school's improvement plan, so that planning is long term;
- increasing teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can do;
- developing the challenges offered to pupils in lessons;
- improving assessment procedures and the use of this information to set work which meets the needs of all pupils;
- developing the monitoring of teaching and learning by subject co-ordinators;
- improving the teaching in information and communication technology, design and technology and music;
- developing a better approach to the teaching of the Numeracy Strategy;
- widening the use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum;
- improving the presentation and marking of pupils' work;
- building on the resources in the school;
- working to improve pupils' rates of attendance.

Paragraphs 1-18, 24, 26- 29, 32,59,60, 68,73,76, 87, 122-161, 172-202,208,209.

2. Improve financial planning to reflect how the school will manage the high overspend if the Local Education Authority fails to provide the funding for the 'Special Support Centre'.

Paragraphs 79 and 80.

3. Ensure that the statutory curriculum is fully implemented and balanced by:

- planning the work more effectively for the mixed aged classes;
- planning schemes of work which are progressively challenging;
- improving the information and communication technology curriculum and those for music and design and technology;
- providing opportunities for pupils to swim 25 metres;
- organising the time for different subjects so that subjects can be developed in greater depth;
- providing more time for pupils to research and do enquiry work .

Paragraphs 10,15, 26,28,29, 32, 37-51, 172-176, 183, 184, 188-192, 208, 193-202.

4. Encourage parents to have greater involvement in the work of the school.

Paragraphs 64 and 65.

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

1. Develop a secure outside play space for the Foundation Stage. Paragraph 86
2. Organise the Foundation Stage class so that Nursery children have better opportunities to learn with skilled adults and use their time more purposefully in learning through play. Paragraphs 31, 83, 89-121.
3. Ensure that parents have all statutory information in the governors' Annual Report to parents. Paragraphs 72 and 75.
4. Continuing to widen pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of British society. Paragraph 51.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	4	38	58	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		52

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	84

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	4	11

As there were fewer than 10 boys and 10 girls in the 2000 year group, only the total data and percentages are shown below.

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	3	3	4
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	27 (66)	27 (46)	36 (69)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	3	4	2
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	27 (54)	36 (60)	18 (46)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	13	15	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	9
	Girls	7	6	5
	Total	13	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	46 (43)	46 (48)	50 (24)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	8	9
	Girls	6	7	8
	Total	12	15	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	43 (52)	54 (62)	61 (29)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	17
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	121
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8
Average class size	22

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	518

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25 pt = to 13 FTE

Total number of education support staff	1 FTE
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	62	3
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	2000-01
	£
Total income	502258
Total expenditure	486354
Expenditure per pupil	2795
Balance brought forward from previous year	5831
Balance carried forward to next year	10122

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	133
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	23	6	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	3	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	35	6	10	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	45	10	6	0
The teaching is good.	55	45	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	35	3	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	23	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	29	0	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	45	48	3	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	45	52	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	55	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	45	13	0	3

Other issues raised by parents

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards have improved. The leadership of the new headteacher. Behaviour is improving. There has been a big improvement in their children's attitude to school and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More advice about how to help with homework. Extra-curricular activities.

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

89. In the Foundation Stage, children benefit from being in a happy and caring working environment, in which they feel valued and secure. These are factors in protecting children against early failure and low self-esteem. This is a real strength of the Foundation Stage provision; moreover, it shows a strong link with the school's aims.

90. Children start in the Nursery at the age of three. The intake is staggered throughout the year. Currently, the Nursery and Reception children are taught together by one teacher, two assistants and a part-time nursery student. Nursery children attend only in the morning.

91. When they start in the Nursery, children have had very few experiences of learning and show very poor attainment in almost all areas of development. Initial assessments by the teachers show that there is some variation from year to year. The current Reception group was slightly stronger than the current Nursery group. By the end of the Reception year, all children have made good progress and achievement is good in all areas of learning and for all groups of children. This includes Traveller children, those with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language. However, a significant number of children are not on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in all areas of their work. A few more able pupils are well on the way to achieving the goals in all areas. The findings of this inspection match those in the previous HMI report.

92. The overall quality of provision and teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good for the nine children in the Reception group and broadly satisfactory for the 25 Nursery children.

Personal, social and emotional development

93. Children's personal and social development is very poor when starting school at three years old. They make good progress and achieve well by the end of the Foundation Stage, although they still show lower than average standards.

94. In the Nursery group, most three and four year olds find it hard to focus their attention on an activity for ten minutes, even with intermittent supervision from an adult. However, they now sit on the carpet for twenty minute sessions, although they sometimes become restless and passive. In this respect, Nursery children do not achieve as well as they could, as this is not always the best use of their time. They are just beginning to show greater curiosity and confidence and control of their toilet needs. Usually, they play alongside others and not directly with other children.

95. In the Reception group, just over half are working at an average level and are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Children are motivated to learn and are confident in initiating activities, when given the opportunity. They maintain attention, concentrate and often speak confidently in familiar settings. They can follow routines and are beginning to engage in conversations with other children. The other five year olds are working well below the expected average level. They do not persist with tasks unless really encouraged to do so by adults. Furthermore, they are apprehensive about trying new things and lack confidence and curiosity in exploring things. Moreover, they are often very reluctant to initiate conversations with others.

96. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with several good features. Skilful teaching and encouragement help children to feel good about what they can achieve. They are developing respect for others due to the good work about friendship, different cultures and in their religious education activities. Planning for development is satisfactory. However, not all staff are sufficiently skilled in knowing how and when to intervene in children's play. Consequently, they miss the chance of building on children's relationships with each other so that they begin to play with another child rather than just next to them.

97. Social skills are often developed satisfactorily through role-play although the limited range of resources sometimes restricts this. For example, in the outside playhouse, three children wanted to cook and make tea. There was no teapot or a complete set of cups, saucers or cutlery or kettle to make this a challenging learning activity. The few dressing up clothes were inside and not accessible to this game. An assistant suggested a picnic but, although the children liked this idea, they were not helped to develop or sustain this imaginative game beyond four minutes. Resources are not always organised to allow children to make choices for themselves. Adults treat the children and each other with respect and this has resulted in the development of trusting and caring relationships.

Communication, language and literacy

98. Children make good progress and achieve well from the Nursery to the end of the Reception year. Nevertheless, only a few children are on course to meet the recommended Early Learning Goals. The class teacher has effectively adapted the National Literacy Strategy framework to meet the needs of most children.

99. The assessment for September 2000 shows that children begin their schooling in the Nursery with very poor speaking skills. Most are only able to communicate basic needs by pointing, using eye contact or facial expressions, but are not confident in using words. This also applies to those for whom English is an additional language. A small number of children can use words to link two ideas together. By the time they leave the Nursery group, standards are still considerably below average, but all have made good progress. Most can communicate with adults, when they feel confident, using a selection of simple sentences. They enjoy repeating simple nursery rhymes.

100. The current Reception group are on course to leave the Foundation Stage showing much lower than average speaking skills overall. Listening is broadly average. Three out of the nine children show average skills and can communicate confidently. They take turns in conversations, use a growing range of vocabulary and can use talk to resolve arguments. However, the other children are still developing their confidence to talk with adults and children and in posing 'where' and 'what' type questions. Children with English as an additional language make good progress, due to good support from the class teacher and a visiting specialist teacher. However, their competence in English is only just developing beyond the very early level.

101. The quality of teaching and learning of speaking skills is satisfactory. The school improvement plan successfully recognised the need to develop this area. The class teacher is giving good support but overall, there is variation in quality. The teacher asks many good and challenging questions and is introducing many new and interesting words. However, adults are not always using questioning to best effect and this can limit learning.

102. Sometimes, assistants give especially good support, but generally this is too inconsistent. An example of this occurred when one child was concentrating on filling bottles at the water tray. Her spontaneous intervention resulted in good learning but the other assistant had totally missed this opportunity when also passing by.

103. The assessments for September 2000 show that children in the Nursery begin their schooling with very poor early reading skills. They make good progress and, by the time they leave the Foundation Stage, their attainment has improved, although it is below average.

104. Children in the Nursery class have made good progress in listening to, and in enjoying, stories. They are not very confident in retelling stories as their language skills are limited. They are beginning to join in with parts of the story that are repeated and enjoy looking at pictures. They do not understand that the printed word helps to tell the story.

105. Six of the current Reception group are working closely towards achieving the Early Learning Goals for reading. The other children are well below average. All children are making very good progress in their reading skills. This is due to the amount of time that is allocated to this and the systematic teaching of skills in their literacy teaching time. All assistants play an active and useful part in hearing children read every day and this having a significant impact on children's attainment. Children with English as an additional language are well supported by all staff. All children enjoy listening to stories and show interest in books.

106. The quality of teaching and learning in reading is good overall, but stronger for the older children than the younger ones. There is steady teaching and learning of reading skills as part of the literacy focus. For example, children could read many words from the seaside poetry book following a whole class reading session. The organisation for reading for Reception children is good as children read in groups and individually every day. For Nursery children, it is broadly satisfactory, but they have fewer opportunities to enjoy books with an adult in small groups and individually.

107. The good teaching for the Reception group ensures that more able children are achieving their full potential. They read simple texts with confidence and can organise a story into a simple sequence. The development of reading is good because the teacher has planned activities which link well over the course of several lessons. For example, children cut out and make their own zigzag storybooks about activities at the seaside in one lesson and then in the next, they use the computer to make up a poem entitled 'Listen'. This included good language development and plenty of opportunities to develop phonic skills.

108. Children's understanding of how to write is very poor when starting school in the Nursery. The vast majority are at the earliest stages of making marks to represent simple pictures and a few make squiggle and scribble shapes for their writing. By the end of their time in the Nursery, they have made satisfactory progress and can distinguish between print and pictures in their own work.

109. By the end of their time in the Reception group, progress is good. Most hold a pencil effectively to form letters, but these are not always correctly formed. By the age of five, more able children can write using initial letter sounds to help them to spell simple words and they can copy writing accurately. Average ability children copy under the teachers' writing and sometimes write for themselves. Less able children show that they do not yet understand that writing is organised into words and they have considerable difficulty with letter formation, as they are not able to apply much pressure to the pencil. Attainment is below average overall.

110. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some inconsistency between the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception groups as expectations are better for five year olds than younger ones. Writing skills are not sufficiently developed through play, for example, through sand and painting work. The writing table in the class is uninspiring and the range of pens and pencils is also uninteresting as well as not being sharpened to improve presentation. There are many missed opportunities for children to write notices, labels and captions for themselves. The teacher uses her time well to help children with accurate letter formation, but when they work alone they often forget this.

111. Children with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve similar standards to other children. This is because although they are often very shy and reluctant to express themselves, the teachers encourage them to build on what they can do. For example, when writing about sandcastles, the teacher listened to one girl and wrote as the child spoke then helped her to make it grammatically accurate. This good, ongoing assessment resulted in good learning.

Mathematical development

112. The assessments for September 2000 show that children begin their schooling in the Nursery with very poor understanding of numbers, counting, shapes and sorting. Progress is satisfactory in the Nursery and good in the Reception group. Achievement is good overall.

113. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with stronger teaching and learning for the children in the Reception group. In mathematical development, children achieve much lower than average standards overall as they leave the Foundation Stage. This is because only a small number of children are really confident in how to use and apply their knowledge practically for addition, simple subtraction and measurement work.

114. There is good teaching by the teacher. This was especially evident in the shape discussions in which she really helped the Reception group to learn the names of three and two-dimensional shapes. Number songs and rhymes were used well to support counting work. The numeracy sessions are satisfactory. Learning is mostly achieved through whole class discussion and group work organised by the teacher. There are missed opportunities to promote learning through building upon children's natural curiosity and play. For example, in the outside sand tray, opportunities to develop the idea of increasing mathematical language and understanding were completely missed. There were also insufficient resources to make the work engaging.

115. The best learning occurred spontaneously by a group of more able Reception children who played at copying the teacher's numeracy activity. Using a 1-100 number board, they covered numbers up and the others had to work out what they were. This showed that three of the children were confident in counting beyond 20 and could recognise some high numbers in the eighties and nineties. Good intervention by the teacher ensured that they identified the difference between such numbers as 93 and 39. Other children made good attempts at counting in order to 20, but they do not count reliably.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

116. When starting school, children have a very poor knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception groups. By the end of the Foundation Stage, their knowledge is much lower than average, as some children find it hard to express themselves. Nevertheless, they show good achievement from their low starting point. Furthermore, they have had limited experiences outside school to enrich their understanding.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Work is well planned so that children can develop a growing understanding about their lives and the cultures and history of others. Skills using information and communication technology resources are developing steadily. Children use construction apparatus with growing confidence, although the range is limited and there are missed opportunities to incorporate this into role play. The teacher had made a big boat for the children but did not organise the time or resources to let them design and construct a different boat for themselves. Children talk simply about changes in the growth of their beanstalks. They can cut and stick with growing accuracy and have made model boats out of a limited range of materials. There is very good progress in cutting skills by the end of the Foundation Stage. Opportunities to learn through their senses are sometimes limited. For example, in the week of the inspection, the water tray was only ever filled with clear water. There was no coloured water or bubbles to inspire children by talking about the colours in the sea or the froth on the water, as part of their seaside topic. The outside play area does not support learning enough, especially for gardening activities.

Physical development

118. When starting school, children show much lower than average physical skills. Hand skills are very poor, but they are generally confident in the early stages of using their whole body for movements. They make good progress in developing small eye and hand co-ordination tasks and satisfactory progress in other physical development. Achievement is good overall. Well over half of the children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Hand skills are developed through a satisfactory range of activities. There are opportunities to develop a satisfactory range of skills in the outside play areas, including climbing, riding tricycles, using stilts and

crawling through tunnels to improve their co-ordination. Climbing skills are average, but balancing and hopping skills are under developed. Apparatus is not always well organised to make this a challenging activity. In one session, hoops were set out to encourage children to hop or stretch and jump from one to another. However, the hoops were not well spaced and this was not rectified. The children tried hard and were praised by the assistant but, although learning was satisfactory, expectations were not high enough. For example, by demonstrating and using vocabulary to describe the actions of how to hop on either leg. Moreover, children were not encouraged to repeat the activity to improve their score, their counting or their overall perseverance. Children are aware of how to use the space and learn to move in different directions when playing the parachute game. The range of resources for physical development is satisfactory, although there are not enough to encourage children to work together and develop their wider social skills.

Creative development

120. When starting school in the Nursery, children have very poor creative skills. By the end of their time in the Nursery they have made satisfactory progress. By the end of the Foundation Stage, progress is good, although they often lack the confidence to use their imagination and do not sustain musical and painting activities for long. Overall, as a result, standards are much lower than average when children finish in the Foundation Stage, and they are not on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals, although they show good achievements from their low starting point.

121. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but there is too much direction from adults and limited planning for independent work. This is partly due to the fact that the range of resources and organisation does not allow children to use their initiative enough. For example, the creative area does not have a wide range of easily accessible paints, papers, brushes and collage materials and boxes which allow children to make and choose things for themselves. They do explore colour, for example in their butterfly paintings and exploration of 'hot' colours. Nevertheless, too much of the work appears to be over planned by the teacher. For example, the attractive wall display of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' show lots of tissue paper collage shapes which an adult has cut. The waves for the sea in the role-play area are a better example of individual work, although the range of paint and brushes was very limited and this hampers creativity. There were missed opportunities to link a range of creative techniques, such as finger painting, collage, printing and combing. Children experiment with practical music making and are learning many simple songs. Some staff are stronger at taking on characters in role-play than others and, as a result, not all children benefit equally from this teaching.

ENGLISH

122. Overall, standards in English are well below average for seven and eleven year olds although those in speaking and listening at Key Stage 1 are below average. This represents lower standards than those reported in the previous inspection in 1999 when, at Key Stage 1, standards in reading were judged to be below average and in writing well below average. At Key Stage 2, standards in English were reported to be below average. However, the national tests results in that year show that in Key Stage 1, standards in both reading and writing were very low and at Key Stage 2, standards in English were well below average. Results in the national tests and assessments for Key Stage 1 in 2000 show that standards were very low in both reading and writing in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. At Key Stage 2, when compared nationally and with similar schools, results in English were well below average. Over the past four years, standards at Key Stage 1 in both reading and writing have fluctuated but have generally been very low, but are improving. At Key Stage 2, standards have shown an upward trend although have still remained well below average. The school's target for 67 per cent of its pupils to reach or exceed the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2001 offers a high degree of challenge. Pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory as they move through the school although there is evidence of some under achievement by more able pupils at Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs, those

in the “Special Support Centre” and Traveller children make satisfactory progress, compared with their earlier attainment, as a result of sensitive, and focused support. Pupils with English as an additional language also achieve satisfactorily because of effective liaison between the specialist and class teachers. During the inspection, boys and girls performed similarly in speaking, listening and writing. In reading, girls have better attitudes and skills.

123. Skills in speaking and listening have been given a high profile in the school as they have been correctly identified as the root cause of pupils’ lack of progress in reading and writing. The success of this initiative is particularly noticeable at Key Stage 1 where standards in all aspects of English are judged to be higher than the 2000 national tests and assessments. Many pupils enter the school with weak skills in spoken language and in their range of vocabulary and ideas and there is an intensive focus on the oral and listening skills of these pupils to compensate for their very low starting point. Teachers consistently reinforce to pupils the importance of careful listening to promote their learning and actively extend their language skills and build up their confidence as speakers. ‘Circle time’, ‘Gallery stars’ celebration assembly, Westcourt bear, plenary sessions and drama workshops are exploited as a means of communication and exploring language and of developing pupils’ responses within a supportive environment. Teachers also introduce key vocabulary appropriately in lessons. The improvement in pupils’ listening skills since the 1999 inspection was evident during an assembly based on ‘The Power of the Dream’ where they listened appreciatively and were reverent and responsible throughout the time of prayer and reflection about how they could fulfil their aspirations.

124. In Year 2, standards in speaking and listening are below average. This represents a sound improvement on the standards reported in the 1999 inspection. Pupils listen attentively to stories, rhymes and explanations and make simple but appropriate responses in class. Some pupils speak confidently in well-formed sentences but others have a limited range of words and indistinct pronunciation and cannot develop their ideas without prompting and support. This was evident in a Year 1/2 lesson in which the teacher skilfully drew out pupils’ ideas about heroes and villains and good and evil in traditional stories like *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and *The Little Red Hen*.

125. In Year 6, standards in speaking and listening are well below average. Most pupils listen carefully and are keen to join in discussions and offer ideas. However, many cannot express their views clearly or provide relevant detail and usually have a limited range of vocabulary. More able pupils use language in a considered and balanced way and give thoughtful opinions. In a Year 5/6 personal, social and health education lesson where pupils explored their responses to different scenarios, a few pupils made constructive and mature comments but many lacked the confidence and breadth of vocabulary to voice their thoughts.

126. Standards in reading are well below average in Year 2. As in the 1999 inspection, pupils are enthusiastic about books and enjoy reading sessions with their teacher. In a Year 1/2 lesson, they caught the air of excitement as they mimicked the thunderous tones of the troll in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. More able pupils use their knowledge of sounds and word building techniques to tackle new words but many pupils have weak strategies and, in spite of prompting and support, they make frequent guesses. Pupils are beginning to be aware of fiction and non-fiction but are not able to locate simple information in the library.

127. Pupils’ reading skills in Year 6 are well below average. More able pupils read their books fluently and accurately and show their enjoyment of reading. However, they do not always read a sufficiently challenging range of books or fully develop their ideas when discussing the more complex meanings in the text. Most pupils draw on a sound range of strategies but some need guidance to build up words accurately. They show an understanding of the main ideas but are unable to discuss characters in any depth, reflect on their reading or explain preferences. Less able pupils have limited reading experiences outside school but they generally read simple texts with accuracy. They are able to name their favourite authors but are diffident about talking about characters or key events. During the inspection, girls had more

positive attitudes to books than boys and showed greater fluency and understanding. The school has identified and responded to this issue by supplementing its range of books with those that specifically appeal to boys. The school has successfully adopted the Reading Reflex Programme and makes effective use of the Volunteer Reading Scheme. Pupils in the 'Special Support Centre' enjoy reading Fuzz buzz books in their individual reading sessions and others show sound concentration on games and activities designed to reinforce their reading. Skills in locating, researching and using information are insufficiently developed across the key stage.

128. Pupils' writing skills are well below average in Year 2. Some pupils are able to communicate their ideas in different forms such as stories, character profiles and rhymes. Their writing shows a sound awareness of sentence formation but it lacks adventurous vocabulary. This was also found in the 1999 inspection. More able pupils are beginning to develop interesting ideas and to use words more imaginatively but less able pupils use simple sentences and phrases that are not always coherent. Pupils' sense of enjoyment in language was evident in their display work on 'Pumpkin Soup' when they were predicting endings.

129. In Year 6, standards in writing are well below average. The writing of more able pupils reflects a variety of moods but it lacks a rich vocabulary. Some pupils write in an organised way, sequence ideas logically and use words aptly although they lack confidence in tackling extended pieces. The work of less able pupils has weaknesses in detail and overall quality and they find it difficult to write complex sentences and extend ideas. 'Gallery stars' assemblies and displays recognise and value pupils' writing and allow all pupils to gain in confidence and develop their enthusiasm for expressing their own views.

130. Across the school, spelling is variable. In many cases, pupils' lack of good speaking skills restricts their ability to spell simple words accurately. Many pupils have yet to develop a clear understanding of the sound and spelling system. Pupils' use of punctuation is also inconsistent and there is an insufficient awareness of paragraphing amongst older pupils. The school has only just started to teach a joined style of handwriting at an early age. Pupils' handwriting in the analysis of work was often unjoined, untidy and inconsistent in size. However, during the inspection, there were clear signs in classes that pupils are beginning to take a pride in the presentation of their work. As pupils move through the school, a good emphasis is placed on the planning, drafting, editing and refining of their written work. However, information and communication technology is insufficiently used to support teaching and learning in English.

131. In all classes, standards in literacy are the same as those found in English but the development of literacy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In many subjects, there is insufficient depth and detail in pupils' work. In some cases, the overuse of undemanding worksheets limits the scope of pupils' experience of writing. However, in Year 4/5 where pupils were studying a local environmental issue in geography about improving 'The Dip', there were good links with literacy as pupils designed a leaflet to canvass local opinion after using their numeracy skills to set a budget for the enterprise.

132. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. There was no specific judgement on the teaching of English in the 1999 inspection. By constant praise and encouragement and skilful behaviour management, all teachers promote a caring and supportive environment, which promotes pupils' learning well. Only occasionally were there signs of pupils' unacceptable attitudes to their work reported in the 1999 inspection. Overall, teaching has improved steadily since 1999. The Year 1/2 teacher drew skilfully on this rapport with pupils when they took the parts of different characters in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and discussed the features of traditional stories. The sense of fun and excitement in the lesson effectively enhanced pupils' enjoyment of language. Similarly, the Year 3/4 teacher sensitively led a discussion about the feelings of Joe in the story of *The Lonely Gate* so that pupils were able to empathise with the characters in their role-play. Teachers also use open ended and targeted questions appropriately to extend ideas and language. As Year 4/5 pupils examined a poster advertising Friends of the Earth in their lesson on persuasive writing, the teacher asked

'What are your first impressions?' 'Why is it eye-catching and effective?' As a result, pupils successfully analysed the purpose of the poster and how it managed to get its message across. In Year 5/6, the teacher's spirited approach and her own sense of enjoyment engaged the interest of the pupils as they examined the classic features of fairy tales and the role of the villain. Throughout the school, the teachers' calm, efficient manner and thorough preparation and organisation of lessons mean that pupils are well aware of routines and procedures. Consequently, they settle quickly and happily to group activities so that vital learning time is not lost.

133. 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. 'Best work only!' instructed the Year 4/5 teacher as pupils drafted a letter to the local council but she did not pursue her expectations of the 'powerfully persuasive' letter as the lesson progressed. In a Year 5/6 lesson where pupils were discussing how Cinderella was an outcast in her family, the teacher did not use her skilful questioning techniques to challenge the more able pupils so that their interest waned as the lesson became protracted. Planning does not always take full account of the wide-ranging needs and abilities of pupils in a mixed age group class. Frequently, the pace of the lessons is too slow to motivate pupils to do their best. In a Year 3/4 lesson, some pupils became distracted and passive when the pace began to flag whereas earlier they had enjoyed identifying pronouns and how they could be used to make their writing flow more easily.

134. A lively pace and the teacher's effortless control of pupils maintained the momentum of a Year 5/6 lesson on main and subordinate clauses which illustrated many of the strengths of teaching across the school. The teacher's good subject knowledge instilled pupils with confidence and enabled her to teach the topic in the required depth. Pupils quickly absorbed the fact that a subordinate clause added more information to the main clause and when a pupil made a mistake on the board, the teacher quickly turned it into a learning point without undermining his confidence. She had high expectations of content, quality and response and realised when pupils had grasped the concept of complex sentences and were ready to move on. Well-pitched questions enabled the more able and pupils with special educational needs to make equally valid contributions to the lesson. Not all pupils found the work easy but most, at their own level, responded to the high level of challenge set by the teacher.

135. The curriculum in English is balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The National Literacy Strategy is soundly established in the school and has been effectively tailored to meet its particular needs. It has been supplemented by 'Literacy goes MADD' and the additional literacy programme. The subject is soundly led and the co-ordinator has a realistic view of the difficulties facing the subject and of how to address them. Targets for development detailed in the subject action plan are appropriate. She monitors planning but does not sample pupils' work or carry out a full programme of classroom observation, which means that her overview of Key Stage 2 is less secure. Assessment procedures in English, including levelling pupils' writing, are satisfactory but there is little evidence that they are used regularly to develop planning. Marking is variable: some consists simply of ticks and praise - 'Lovely work!' 'Great letter!' - whereas some gives good guidance to pupils on how they could improve their work. - 'Use narrative to move the story on, not dialogue'. Pupils have appropriate targets in literacy to motivate them but teachers do not raise pupils' awareness of them regularly enough to make them an integral part of learning. Teaching assistants are not always used efficiently at the beginning of the literacy hour although they give good support in group work. Resources are satisfactory but book corners and libraries are not always attractive enough to stimulate pupils' interest in, and enjoyment of, books. The subject is enhanced by theatre visits, such as *Starlight Express* and *Winnie the Pooh*, drama workshops and companies and storytelling. English makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they write poems about Easter, devise their own versions of traditional tales and discuss issues arising from their reading. Eye-catching and lively displays such as Year 4/5

work on 'Is it cruel to keep animals in a circus?' and 'Gallery Stars' give pupils a sense of pride and show that their work is valued.

MATHEMATICS

136. The findings of this inspection indicate that, in Year 2, most pupils reach standards that are below average in mathematics and their standards in numeracy are similar. In the inspection of 1999, standards were said to be low, therefore, some improvement has been made. In the latest tests for seven year olds, the group of pupils was small, but the proportion that attained the national standard was very low when compared with the national average and with similar schools. The proportion of pupils whose attainment was above average was also very low. The difference between test scores and the findings of this inspection is partly explained because the pupils were a different year group, but more particularly because the school now has a stable staff and mathematics has a very clear focus in the school improvement plan. Trends since 1998, show a decline in standards in the National test results for Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, there was a sharp improvement between 1998 and 1999 and then a slight drop from 1999 to 2000. The progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good if compared with their attainment when they entered the in the Nursery. There were no observed differences in the achievements of boys and girls in lessons and from their class work. However, in the latest tests, boys' attainment was lower than that of girls.

137. The standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are below average. As for Year 2, this judgement is based upon teaching observed, an analysis of pupils' work and discussion with them. There has been improvement on the 2000 results largely due to the fact that in Year 2, pupils are more able than those who took the tests last year. In addition to this, at both key stages, teaching has improved and is more consistent. In 1999, the inspection judgement on standards was that they were below average. In the latest national tests for 11 year olds, standards reached were well below average and the proportion of pupils who reached the higher level was also well below. When compared with similar schools, test results showed below average attainment, but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level, was only just below the average. Because of the extent of changes in the school, it is not possible to make a firm judgement about the progress of pupils in Year 6 compared with their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. However, the indications are that achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There were no observed differences in the achievements of boys and girls, but test results in the year 2000 indicate that girls do less well than boys, although over time there are wide fluctuations in these differences. The school set very challenging targets for 78 per cent of its pupils to reach the national average this year.

138. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. This judgement is based upon lesson observations, analysis of work and discussion with pupils. The previous inspection described teaching overall as satisfactory in both key stages. In a satisfactory Year 1/2 lesson, the teacher gave clear explanations of the tasks and this enabled pupils to start their practical work quickly. Learning support assistants helped Year 1 pupils to develop their mathematical vocabulary and understanding and this allowed the teacher to give close support to Year 2 pupils. The activity, which involved the recognition and 'making up' of coins to a predetermined value, provided a satisfactory challenge, but not all pupils concentrated well because the teacher did not sufficiently insist that they paid close attention to the tasks. In the plenary session, pupils listened attentively and were keen to contribute their knowledge, but when asked, were less keen to discuss what they understood. The teacher had the disadvantage of not knowing the pupils very well, because their regular teacher was unable to teach the whole class during the inspection.

139. Analysis of work in both years of Key Stage 1 indicates that expectations of what pupils should achieve are not high enough. Particularly unsatisfactory are the quality of presentation and the layout of work. There is a lack of care and necessary mathematical precision, some

slow progress, unfinished work and inaccurate results. There are weaknesses in pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics and also in their coverage of shape, space and measures.

140. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features in lessons. This judgement is based upon lesson observations, analysis of work and discussion with pupils. In a satisfactory Year 6 lesson, the teacher held the attention of pupils by the clear explanations she gave and her enthusiastic presentation. The practical task, to use mental strategies in the addition and subtraction of decimal numbers, challenged pupils and they made a good effort to use and consolidate their knowledge. Pupils concentrated well because the activities were interesting and within their capabilities. Good relationships enabled work to proceed smoothly, but the pace of the lesson was too relaxed. Some good use was made of questioning to assess pupils' understanding and help them extend their thinking, but the teacher did not sufficiently stress that pupils should listen carefully to one another during discussion.

141. Good teaching was observed in Year 4/5 when the teacher held the attention of pupils by presenting them with the challenge to construct different types of triangles from strips of card. They showed a keen interest in discussion of similarities and differences, but few had a sufficient mathematical vocabulary to do this well. The teacher made good use of resources to show pupils the key properties of triangles and then extend their understanding of these by careful questioning.

142. In a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils made satisfactory progress overall in the mental operation of subtraction. Many found the task difficult and this caused some to work too slowly. However, the teacher continuously monitored pupils' progress, assisted by two learning support assistants, and gave specific help where needed. In mathematics, pupils are generally grouped together according to their previous attainment. This means, for example, that pupils of similar attainment, but from different year groups, work together. This is a very recent innovation and is only partly satisfactory because, within these sets, teachers do not ensure that work is matched closely enough to pupils' individual needs.

143. In Key Stage 2, marking is not always carried out regularly and there is little evidence that it shows pupils how to improve their work. In all classes, there is insufficient emphasis upon the need to record work in a clear, logical and tidy manner. This often results in muddle and inaccuracy.

144. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy, but this has not been sufficiently effective in raising standards. The standard of numeracy is below average and is not used sufficiently well to support learning in other subjects. Teachers' preparations draw upon the content of the strategy, but the way in which they plan and teach lessons lacks the precision and detail of the national format. Considering the standards of attainment in both key stages, this is a weakness. There is little use of information and communication technology in the subject, mainly because of the lack of resources. However, the computers that are available are not used enough for mathematics.

145. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced overall, but shape, space and measures are given less priority in both key stages as is data handling in Key Stage 2. In both key stages, there is insufficient emphasis on using and applying mathematics. The school has purchased a commercially produced mathematics scheme of work, which is helpful, but not yet embedded in whole school practice. The co-ordinator has recently begun to monitor teachers' planning with regard to the requirements of the National Curriculum and National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils have some homework in both key stages to help them develop their skills and understanding. This is good practice, although parents are not always clear about how to help their children. The school is aware of the differences in attainment between boys and girls but, because rigorous analysis of data has only recently begun, reasons for these differences have not been fully identified. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and provide teachers with valuable information about the progress of pupils. However, the information is not used to help teachers plan the mathematics curriculum to meet the particular needs of pupils.

146. The enthusiastic subject co-ordinator has been appointed recently. Priorities for development have been identified and incorporated into the school improvement plan. The co-ordinator does not monitor teaching or the work of pupils and this is a significant weakness because of the low standards of pupils' attainment. However, an advisor has monitored teaching and has given the co-ordinator useful information to help develop appropriate strategies. Resources are adequate and are used effectively to contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding. The subject meets statutory requirements.

SCIENCE

147. The standard of work is well below average by the ages of seven and eleven. In reaching this judgement, the inspection team analysed samples of pupils' work from all year groups and observed the teaching in three science lessons. These findings are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection by HMI in 1999. However, since then, there has been good improvement in provision of resources, the quality of teaching and in pupils' overall performance.

148. Although standards remain very low, there has been rapid improvement in the percentage of pupils who are able to attain the expected average Level 4 in the national tests at the age of eleven. This increased from 24 per cent to 50 per cent in 2000. Furthermore, the findings of this inspection show that about 50 per cent of the current Year 6 are working at an average level. Moreover, girls are attaining similar standards to boys, which shows further improvement since the last inspection when girls did not do as well as boys. Pupils with English as an additional language often achieve slightly better standards than others of the same age. They are well supported in their language work, are motivated to learn and receive good support by class teachers and specialist visiting staff.

149. Overall, considering pupils' very poor knowledge and understanding of the world, when starting school and their vast array of emotional and social difficulties, they achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory overall progress. The few more able pupils are not stretched sufficiently. In this respect, teachers' expectations in lessons and in their planning are not high enough. Furthermore, the school does not have a helpful means of assessing pupils' levels of scientific knowledge and understanding. Thus, this makes it difficult for teachers to plan work for different ability groups and to set individual targets for pupils' improvement. Nevertheless, they have analysed the national test results satisfactorily in order to establish areas for improvement.

150. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall at both key stages. However, pupils' learning has not built up steadily; indeed, many pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding which are a result of being taught by a succession of temporary teachers. The current teachers have a good understanding of how to teach science and are working very hard to identify and fill them. Nevertheless, the current organisation of mixed aged classes and lack of assessment procedures have made this task difficult.

151. The written science curriculum is not well organised to ensure progressive development of knowledge as pupils move through the school. For example, the work on habitats in Years 4, 5 and 6 is all too similar and results in some pupils repeating work and not experiencing enough progression in their learning when they move from one class to the next. In this respect, there are weaknesses in providing equal opportunities in the mixed aged classes. The co-ordinator is well aware of these shortcomings from her monitoring of planning. Furthermore, she has already begun to prepare a better curriculum for September. In most other aspects, equal opportunities are good. Pupils with English as an additional language, Traveller pupils and those with special educational needs share equal opportunities and are given the support to help them to be fully included in all aspects of work in science. However, the work that is planned for more able pupils is not challenging enough. The amount of time allocated the learning of science broadly matches the recommended amount. Nevertheless, the curriculum is

not well balanced as some aspects of work in science have received more attention than others. For example, materials have less input than other areas.

152. The quality of teaching is satisfactory from the samples of work and discussions with pupils. Two of the lessons seen during the inspection were very good, one was good and one satisfactory. The staff have worked very successfully to improve behaviour and pupils' belief in themselves that they can succeed. This has meant that work had to be planned so that they can experience success. Behaviour is now good and pupils show satisfactory interest in science. Currently, lessons with a swift pace are limited.

153. Overall, expectations for improving presentation and opportunities for pupils to show their initiative in learning, by researching and evaluating ideas in small groups are underdeveloped. This was best in a good Year 4/5 lesson when the pupils went outside and searched for insects in the wild area using pooters and magnifying glasses. They were excited and enthralled by this lesson but attention to health and safety was very good. Furthermore, pupils showed respect for the wildlife and they gasped in wonder when they found grasshoppers, slugs, snails, woodlice and spiders. Although the teacher had a camera, she missed the opportunity to capture these moments as a record. There were insufficient resources so that each pupil could use a pooter to make this learning even more successful. Furthermore, when they returned to the class, pupils were not able to draw their creatures in detail, as the pencils were unsuitable for the task and the magnifying glasses were not powerful enough to see fine detail. Furthermore, although the school has a microscope, this was not used. The teacher used good discussion to develop pupils' knowledge about habitats, but more able pupils did not use reference books to extend their knowledge as all pupils were given the same follow up task. Overall, the recording work was not challenging enough.

154. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough for the more able pupils. Their work shows very little difference in what they are required to do although, in the two very good lessons, expectations were good. Planning is good for most groups of pupils but it is weaker for more able pupils. In one of the very good lessons in Year 5/6, pupils learned how plants and animals are interdependent. The teacher rightly altered her plan at the last minute to give more able pupils a better chance of achieving their full potential. This was successful as they used books to research how different wild life on the seashore are suited to their habitat. By the end of the session, this group showed average attainment in discussion about how plants and animals use plants for food and shelter and that plants also need animals for fertiliser and seed dispersal. However, their recording was below average as they are not confident in drawing their thoughts together and writing notes.

155. The use of questioning and development of scientific vocabulary is a real strength of teaching and learning. Speaking and listening skills were identified for improvement as part of the school's yearly improvement plan. This has been very successful. In another very good lesson, taken by the deputy headteacher and supported by the usual class teacher and two other assistants, work was well planned for all abilities and provided plenty of 'hands on' investigation and discussion about force. Year 2 pupils benefited from working in a small group to make hypotheses and test their ideas about how far a toy car will travel when the slope of a road alters. In this lesson, learning was exciting and captured the pupils' imaginations. Learning was very good as pupils concentrated and persevered to overcome problems when an extension to the road was needed. Following this, pupils measured in sets of ten centimetres and predicted what would happen when the slope was increased or decreased. The questioning by the teacher was excellent, with plenty of what, how, why type questions and resulted in very good learning.

156. In this same very good lesson, there was a good example of how the planning and organisation of the curriculum do not take sufficient account of how to make learning progressive as pupils move from year to year. The rest of this class were equally busy, but not all Year 2 pupils benefited from this very exciting activity as they explored force in the Year 1 groups by experimenting with moulding plasticine and by finding how force is used around the

school. They made good progress and links with literacy were very good as pupils wrote labels to accompany photographs of how we use force in the playground and which words represent force, such as push, pull, stretch and tug. However, clustering them with other Year 1 pupils did not help them to see themselves as Year 2 pupils who aspire to higher things than younger pupils.

157. Teachers are working hard to motivate pupils, but often they are passive learners and lack the confidence to try things out or suggest ideas spontaneously. Their interest, concentration and independence are improving steadily and are best when teachers provide exciting 'hands on' investigative work as noted above. There are insufficient resources to make this kind of learning possible in most lessons. However, the school is constantly extending resources. There are new, well organised resources, which are treated with respect by the pupils. In this aspect, there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection, when pupils would sometimes destroy or deface school property. In one satisfactory lesson, pupils were keen to explore the properties of different rocks, but there were not really enough. The teacher focused too much on recording the experiment in writing before all pupils had become engaged in the investigation so that learning was not as challenging and effective as it could have been. Furthermore, the Year 4 pupils in this class were doing completely different work from the Year 4 pupils in the other class. The difference in challenge between the Year 3 and the Year 4 pupils was almost minimal.

158. Teachers' marking is too variable. Sometimes, it is very challenging, especially in the Year 5/6 class. Furthermore, pupils do not have the opportunity to go back to develop their work based on teachers' comments. Marking is better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. In Years 1/2, comments help pupils to remember what they are learning about but do not extend their understanding. For example, a teacher wrote in a pupils' book: 'you are naming parts of the body', rather than extending their knowledge of parts of the body which had not been labelled or by insisting that labels were neatly written with marker lines drawn with a ruler. Presentation is generally untidy as pupils have low self-esteem and do not find it easy to take a pride in their work. However, teachers do not remind them to sharpen their pencils.

159. The management of behaviour is good and is having an impact on the improving standards. This allows pupils with challenging behaviour to work with good support in the Special Support Centre. This results in better progress for all pupils. Pupils in the Centre learn about healthy eating and can sort foods simply according to different food groups. Overall, their attainment is very poor.

160. The co-ordinator is new to the post. She shows satisfactory management and good leadership. She is highly motivated and energetic. Moreover, she has a very clear idea of how to develop the subject successfully. The capacity to succeed is very good, as she has correctly identified what needs to be done to improve. This includes the development of assessment, resources, monitoring of teaching and a written long term development plan to raise attainment. These areas are currently unsatisfactory.

161. There are a high number of additional staff in the school. The use of support staff to help pupils to focus, and develop scientific language and ideas is good. As a result, pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs learn satisfactorily and sometimes well where there are more resources for practical work. Traveller pupils are well supported and given help to fill the gaps in their knowledge. The use of information and communication technology in supporting work in this subject is poor. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

ART AND DESIGN

162. Standards in art are broadly average at the ages of seven and eleven. At the time of the last HMI inspection in 1999, it was noted that there was a range of good quality artwork around the school. This is still evident. In this respect, standards remain similar to those reported on in 1999. Overall, all pupils achieve satisfactorily, but more able pupils are not challenged enough.

163. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager to listen and learn. Their behaviour is good and even those with challenging behaviour are highly motivated to do this work. Pupils really feel a sense of success and this is helping to enhance their self-esteem. Good support by assistants means that all pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning.

164. Learning is satisfactory; this includes the learning of pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and Traveller pupils. Pupils are developing creative skills in a range of work, including colour, drawing, printing, textiles and sculpture. They show satisfactory creativity and imagination in their work. For example, in Year 2, they have mixed a few colours to paint sunflowers in the style of Van Gogh. Although pupils understand what they are doing, they do not always understand how to improve. This is largely due to lack of teaching for the progressive development of skills and techniques. In this respect, the curriculum and teachers' planning do not identify enough progression in learning. For example, in the colour work, the skills of watercolour are not identified and taught progressively.

165. Opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of the work of different artists are inconsistent. For example, the Year 1 scheme shows planned work on Van Gogh, Henry Moore and David Hockney while the plan for Year 2 makes no reference to specific artists, although from the work on display they have also looked at Van Gogh's paintings. This was also evident in the lesson on printing, where the teacher did not refer to contemporary artists' work to inspire pupils to use colour more creatively. As a result, pupils' prints lacked variety. This was also evident in the work in the 'Special Support Centre' where pupils experimented with colour using potato prints. This work was of a very low standard, but they were totally engrossed in the creative experience. For all pupils it was a very good experience, which had a fine effect on their attitude, perseverance and concentration. However, the teacher missed the opportunity to link their efforts as artists to the work of modern artists as a way of further enhancing their knowledge and self esteem.

166. Overall, teachers and assistants have a broadly satisfactory knowledge of the subject, but do not teach skills enough. For example, when painting a picture of a Traveller pupil's Wagon, the pupil could not represent the fine detail because the brush and paint were both too thick and he was not shown how to let parts dry before adding more colour. Consequently, the end result lacked the clarity that the pupils had been attempting to achieve. In another satisfactory lesson, pupils made clay sculptures of characters from 'Joe and the Killer Coat' and the stories about 'Tilled'. The links with literacy were good, but pupils were not shown how to join legs and arms by dabbing water onto the clay and then smoothing the sections together. This resulted in frustration for several pupils as they had to re-do their models. Nevertheless, overall, pupils are productive and show a satisfactory pace of learning. However, there is insufficient difference in the expectations for older and younger pupils in the mixed age classes.

167. One good lesson was seen in Year 5/6. The theme was photography. This showed many good features that are otherwise missing in the teaching elsewhere in the school. Links with history and homework were good. Pupils had brought in a wide range of photographs from newspapers, magazines and family snap shots. The teacher had excellent subject knowledge and talked to the pupils using complex vocabulary and ideas. This resulted in challenging learning with very high expectations to raise attainment to a higher than average level. Pupils talked about the difference in poses for formal and informal shots. Learning was extended to include very good explanation about how photographs are 'captured'. Furthermore, pupils learnt that the quality would depend on the number of round pixels for an ordinary negative and square pixels for a digital camera. By the end of the lessons, pupils had become restless; this was because there was too much input by the teacher and no opportunity to take photographs.

168. Overall, assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers are not assessing pupils' work enough as they move around the groups and there are no simple and effective procedures for assessing pupils' ongoing progress and development of skills. Moreover, there are no procedures and additional support for identifying very able, talented and gifted pupils.

169. There is satisfactory leadership and management in this subject. The co-ordinator recognises the need to widen the use of visiting artists and visits to galleries, but there is no written long term development plan for the subject. The monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is underdeveloped. The co-ordinator is also responsible for mathematics and the Foundation Stage. This is a very heavy workload, which she manages with enthusiasm.

170. The school has a good capacity to succeed with the further development of this subject. Resources have improved considerably since the last inspection, but they are still insufficient. There are too few posters, books, drawing pencils, and brushes of different thickness to enhance learning to the highest level. Currently, the use of information and control technology is poor, but there are good plans to improve this when the new computer suite is in operation.

171. Displays are attractive; they show that pupils' work is highly valued and this helps to create a positive learning environment. The staff are very successful in helping pupils to develop social skills, overcome behaviour difficulties and develop a love for learning through special project work on 'MADD'. In this, pupils enjoy integrated music, art, dance and drama projects to develop their literacy skills. Pupils of all abilities and cultures feel included. For example, the projects on Travellers' culture and in design work for their float for the Northfleet Carnival.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

172. Pupils attain standards well below average at the ages of seven and eleven. There is little evidence of design and technology in Key Stage 1. Analysis of what pupils have done in Year 2 indicates an unsatisfactory range, depth and amount of work covered. Attainment is, therefore, judged to be well below average. In the previous inspection of 1997, attainment was judged to be in line with national expectations. The main reason for this difference is noted above.

173. In both key stages, the rate of progress made by pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is unsatisfactory. This judgement is based upon an analysis of pupils' work. In both key stages, because of the lack of evidence, it is not possible to say whether there are any differences in attainment between boys and girls

174. Overall, standards in Key Stage 2 are well below average. Analysis of a small amount of pupils' work, discussion with those in Year 6 and the observation of two lessons indicates that standards are not high enough. This is because insufficient attention is given to high quality design, care in making and to the rigorous evaluation of work by pupils. The previous inspection reported that standards in Key Stage 2 were the same as those in Key Stage 1. The reasons for the differences between the judgements are noted in this paragraph.

175. The quality of teaching and learning, mostly judged by an analysis of pupils' work and discussion with them, is unsatisfactory in both key stages, although two satisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. The inspection of 1997 reported teaching to be satisfactory overall, but weak at the end of Key Stage 2. Thus, little improvement has been made. Pupils in Year 6 have only a very basic grasp of the principles of design, making and the evaluation of products. Where there is evidence of work by pupils, it does not generally reflect a satisfactory level of teachers' knowledge or high expectations of what could be achieved. This is particularly evident in the way in which pupils produce designs, because few pay attention to quality and appropriate detail. In a Year 3/4 lesson, the teacher had set the pupils the task of making a cuboid in order to develop their marking, cutting and assembling skills. They did this satisfactorily, but they did not maximise their efforts because pupils had not previously been taught how to evaluate their products rigorously and how to make improvements. There is insufficient emphasis upon the full range of design and making activities in both key stages. Therefore, pupils' work lacks detail, accuracy and breadth.

176. There is a policy for the subject and the school uses the scheme of work published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This is only partly successful because the specific learning needs of the pupils, related to their previous experience of design and technology, are not fully met. There is no formal system that allows teachers to assess what pupils can do, or to enable them to plan an appropriate curriculum. Little, if any, use is made of information and communication technology in the subject. The co-

ordinator has recently been appointed and, because of other more pressing responsibilities, has been unable to produce a comprehensive improvement plan. However, she is aware of what needs development and has begun to monitor teachers' planning, but not their teaching. Resources are inadequate and this is a further obstruction to the full development of the subject. Statutory requirements are not met because the subject has only limited range and depth of content.

GEOGRAPHY

177. The attainment of pupils in geography is well below average in Years 2 and 6. This broadly reflects the findings of the 1997 inspection. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 including those with special educational needs, with English as an additional language, Traveller children and pupils in the "Special Support Centre", make unsatisfactory progress in this subject. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Judgements are based on classroom observations, an analysis of work, a review of the school's planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. The school does not allocate sufficient time to the teaching of the subject to allow teachers to cover topics in enough depth to enable average standards to be achieved. The poor quality of the school's learning resources in the subject also slows down the progress that pupils make and weaknesses in literacy skills hinder their ability to record work satisfactorily.

178. The quality of teaching in both key stages is satisfactory but the quality of learning is unsatisfactory. In the 1997 inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory across the school. Teachers prepare lessons thoroughly and organise activities carefully to build on pupils' existing knowledge but inadequate resources and time constraints undermine pupils' attainment. Poor resources were also identified in the 1997 inspection. In Key Stage 1, pupils are aware of the weather and its effect on people and places. They understand that many parts of the world have weather that is different from their own and compare what they know about their own environment with more distant places. In a Year 1/2 lesson, the teacher made skilful use of a large picture map and colourful photographs of the immediate area to stimulate a discussion about the differences between living on an island and living in a town. From listening to the Katie Morag stories, the pupils knew about varied aspects of life on the fictional island of Struay. The teacher stressed correct geographical language, such as 'mountain', 'farmland', 'hills', 'streets', 'river', which had a sound impact on pupils' learning of how an island differs from the mainland. As they follow the travels of Westcourt bear, pupils gain some understanding of different places. However, their ability to record information in writing, maps or pictures is very limited although the more able can draw a simple map of the school and nearby shops. Work is often untidily presented.

179. As they move into Key Stage 2, lack of time and insufficient globes, atlases and maps, as well as general resources to support the teaching of separate topics, hamper the development of pupils' geographical skills. However, teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing key vocabulary and mapping skills. Year 3/4 pupils were keen to check the accuracy of a map of the school and the surrounding area and this led to a thoughtful discussion about how the land around the school could be used productively. They made sound gains in their knowledge of land use settlements and identifying human and physical features on a map although the pace flagged at times and the teacher did not make clear her expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Year 5/6 pupils are enjoying a topical approach to geography 'What's in the news?' where local and national issues, such as the foot and mouth outbreak, are used to develop geographical skills and ideas. The analysis of work shows that they have some knowledge of the water cycle and the development of river systems. However, because of lack of time, the range of work covered was limited which restricted pupils' knowledge of the topic.

180. 'The Dip is a Skip!' A good Year 4/5 lesson on improving a local eyesore illustrated the strengths in the teaching of the subject across the school. Pupils had already decided that the area could be improved by transforming it into a playground and the teacher led a thoughtful discussion about changes that might be controversial and how they could canvass local

opinion. In good links with their work on persuasive writing, pupils designed a leaflet to reassure residents that their play area would be of benefit to the neighbourhood and the teacher challenged them to justify their opinions. They made significant gains in their understanding of how people can change and improve the environment and how it can alter the quality of life of its inhabitants.

181. However, pupils in this key stage have not been provided with sufficient knowledge of patterns and processes to reach average standards. A weakness in provision is the lack of a study of a contrasting environment and insufficient opportunities for pupils to take part in independent research work and to prepare suitable geographical questions for study and investigation. Even more able pupils have not reached the stage where they ask searching questions about their findings. Information and communication technology is not used enough to support teaching and learning in geography.

182. The co-ordinator provides sound management of the subject and has devised a clear policy. Planning is based on national guidelines although it is recognised that it will have to be adapted to the school's needs. This is an improvement since the 1997 inspection. Areas for development are appropriate including an outdoor classroom, improving resources and a playground project. There are no whole school procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in the subject and this is unsatisfactory. All classes make a visit to the coast, and teachers make good use of the local environment, but pupils are not taken further afield to extend their geographical knowledge and skills. The subject makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by raising their awareness of environmental concerns and the need for the conservation of resources.

HISTORY

183. Standards in history are well below average in both Year 2 and Year 6. This judgement, which is the same as the 1997 OFSTED inspection, takes into account the lessons observed, an analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. The school does not allocate enough time to the teaching of the subject to allow teachers to cover its content fully or in sufficient depth. The unsatisfactory range of resources to support the teaching of topics also slows down pupils' learning. Weaknesses in literacy skills hinder pupils' progress in the subject. As a result, achievement in history is unsatisfactory for pupils across the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, Traveller children and pupils in the "Special Support Centre". There were no differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

184. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages but the quality of learning is unsatisfactory. In the 1997 inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory across the school. Teachers have sound expertise and confidence in teaching the subject but insufficient curricular time and unsatisfactory resources undermine pupils' learning. Lack of resources was also identified at the 1997 inspection. The analysis of work shows that, with the help of timelines, pupils in Year 1/2 have a suitably developed sense of chronology for their age, can use words associated with the passing of time and are starting to answer questions about the past when studying photographs. As a result, of direct and structured teaching, they have discovered the reasons for celebrating Bonfire Night in their study of Guy Fawkes and more able pupils can confidently relate a simple version of the Gunpowder Plot. However, the range and depth of recorded work are too limited so that historical skills are insufficiently developed and there is no sign of early research work.

185. Pupils in the Year 3/4 class have studied the influence of Pocahontas on Gravesend and their interest in local history was well channelled by their teacher when they used old postcards of the town as historical evidence to help them draw conclusions about the past. The teacher developed historical language well as she guided group discussions about how transport, buildings and dress in the High Street, Holy Trinity Street and Town Pier in Old Gravesend had changed over time. As the lesson progressed, pupils became increasingly aware of their rich local heritage and their ability to analyse historical change was developed

effectively. The teacher then skilfully extended pupils' natural curiosity about the past by focusing on the history of the school and encouraged them to ask their families and friends, who were former pupils, for their reminiscences. Pupils in Year 4/5 have studied the impact of invasion as they learned about the arrival and settlement of the Vikings through examining chronicles and letters. However, an over reliance on undemanding worksheets meant that their work lacked depth of historical experience and a sound understanding of the context in which these people lived.

186. A strength of pupils' learning is their obvious enjoyment in acquiring the detective skills needed in history. This was evident in a good Year 5/6 lesson where pupils investigated how the coming of the railways affected Victorian life through studying primary and secondary sources. The teacher placed good emphasis on respect for historical evidence and insisted that pupils should back up their opinions. In discussion, they offered ideas thoughtfully and gave relevant information about how coal was transported across Britain by rail and the social implications of the different classes of carriage. They had made good gains in their understanding of how technological change had shaped the history of the times as a result of confident, knowledgeable teaching and their own enthusiasm and commitment to the task. In that lesson, pupils' enquiry skills were developed well but in general, in Key Stage 2, there is too little time devoted to the subject for pupils to work through enquiry, observation and interpretation. Historical language and chronology are developed satisfactorily but pupils do not do enough independent research and opportunities are missed for developing literacy skills through discussion, illustration and writing. As a result, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as young historians are underdeveloped. This is similar to the findings of the 1997 inspection. Broadly, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, although teaching time limits extended study.

187. A sound policy now supports teaching and learning in history. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines are being adapted as schemes of work to fit into the school's curricular plan. This is an improvement since the 1997 inspection. The subject is satisfactorily led and the co-ordinator has a clear view of its future development. Her monitoring role in classroom observation and in scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' planning is insufficiently developed. Information and communication technology is not used enough to support learning. Displays, such as Year 3/4 work on the lifestyle of the rich and poor in Tudor times, provide a good focus for learning. History makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they appreciate the legacy of ancient civilisations such as Greece and Egypt, enjoy group work when researching information and discuss the danger of working practices in Victorian Britain. A visit is planned shortly to Hever Castle but there are few visits or visitors to bring history to life for pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

188. In Key Stage 1, no teaching was observed, and because little work was available for analysis in Year 2, standards attained by pupils are below average. The inspection of 1997 reported that standards of attainment were satisfactory, but that there was inconsistent progress made by pupils. The reason for difference in the reported attainment of pupils is that the range and depth of work that they currently do are too restricted. No judgement can be made about the overall progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, because there is insufficient evidence.

189. The overall attainment of pupils in Year 6 is below average. A comparison with the judgement of the previous inspection indicates that some progress has been made because attainment was then reported to be poor in Key Stage 2. Although there is evidence of more work in Key Stage 2, the range that pupils experience is insufficient to meet the full demands of the National Curriculum. The progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is also unsatisfactory because of the reasons noted above.

190. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the lessons observed, but unsatisfactory overall because of the limitations to pupils' learning. However, progress although still unsatisfactory, is better than in Key Stage 1 because pupils have generally had experience of a wider range of work. The previous inspection report made no judgement on the quality of teaching in either key stage. In a Year 5/6 lesson, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge, provided a satisfactory challenge for pupils to learn and made good use of questioning to help pupils develop understanding. Pupils were able to explain how to open a file, amend information and save their work. However, discussion with them revealed that they have limited understanding of the everyday use of information and communication technology, of the use of databases and of modelling and simulation of real or imaginary events. In a Year 3/4 lesson, the teacher gave a demonstration of how to combine text and graphics. This was only partly successful because the computer resources were insufficient to allow pupils to do this themselves. However, the pupils showed a good level of interest in the demonstration although some became restless and inattentive at times.

191. The school has no scheme of work for the subject. This is unsatisfactory because teachers cannot effectively plan for pupils to build up their skills and knowledge in the subject over time. However, the school improvement plan indicates that this is to be rectified. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, but this is not fully checked against National Curriculum requirements. Some enhancement to pupils' learning is provided by an after school computer club. There are no whole school procedures to assess what pupils can do. As a result, planning the curriculum for the improvement of pupils' skills and knowledge is poor and this adversely affects their attainment and progress.

192. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and aware of current shortcomings in the subject. Much has been achieved in a short time to reorganise and improve what the school provides, but monitoring of what pupils do and of teaching is not established and, therefore, a more precise view of what needs to be improved is lacking. The school is making good use of specific funding to develop the subject through the setting up of a good computer suite. However, computers in classrooms are not well used and, during the inspection, few pupils were seen to use them. A policy to protect pupils from inappropriate use of the Internet is currently being written. Statutory requirements for the subject are not met because the range and depth of the work do not match the full demands of the National Curriculum.

MUSIC

193. Standards in music are below average at the ages of seven and eleven for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and Traveller pupils. During the inspection, it was only possible to hear singing in assemblies. No lessons were observed. Two lessons were planned for the Friday following the last day of the inspection. In one class, no music was planned for that week.

194. In discussion with the very newly appointed deputy headteacher, who will be co-ordinating this subject from September, and the headteacher, evidence suggests that teaching and learning are currently unsatisfactory and are broadly similar to those found at the 1997 inspection, although standards were better than at Key Stage 1.

195. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Until December 2000, the pupils benefited from having weekly lessons with a specialist teacher and this showed good progress since the last inspection. The pupils spoke to the inspection team about this provision. Clearly, they had enjoyed this work and had opportunities to take part in a broad range of experiences. However, the school's finances cannot support another teacher at present and this means that class teachers are responsible for teaching their own music lessons.

196. Teachers do not have the skills, expertise and confidence to do this effectively. The new co-ordinator recognises the need to develop their teaching of basic skills and to introduce a scheme of work which helps pupils to make progress in their learning whilst also giving teachers suggestions and guidance on how to develop their teaching of music. Currently, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and the pace of

work is poor. All pupils are not learning as much as they could. There is no policy for music and no procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils.

197. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and gusto but not always tunefully. They have the makings of a very strong choir but their pitch and phrasing have weaknesses. The new co-ordinator is also the deputy headteacher, special educational needs co-ordinator and design and technology co-ordinator. Hence, her workload is considerable and music has not been her first priority. However, she shows satisfactory leadership. The priorities, targets and capacity to improve are good. She is exploring assessment systems and different schemes of work so that music will again comply with the National Curriculum. Workshop sessions are planned to develop the expertise of staff and the coordinator will also be taking classes for individual lessons. Resources are limited but there is a good music room. Currently, information and control technology resources are poorly supporting work.

198. The teachers' termly plans show that there is too much inconsistency in the amount of time spent on music. Overall, pupils are getting very unequal opportunities and this is a weakness. Furthermore, the amount of time that is allocated to the teaching of music is much lower than average and this is one reason why standards are low.

199. The best feature of music is the good cultural provision outside lessons. During the inspection week, pupils listened to a local hand bell ringing group. This was full of moments of complete wonder, as pupils were totally spellbound at their very spiritual playing of 'Amazing Grace'. Popular contemporary music is played during Breakfast Club and the whole entrance area is filled with relaxing music to set a calm ethos when entering the building. This has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour. The Step Hop Dance Company visited the school and helped pupils to see how different instruments can be used to accompany their dance. The school organises musical productions each year, but currently there are no clubs for choir, or specialist instrumental teaching.

200. Pupils' personal development is enriched by visits to London to see shows. For example they recently went to see 'Starlight Express'. Pupils select their own music for dance club, fashion shows and talent contests, which show good initiative and personal responsibility. Pupils in Year 2 are familiar with the music from 'Peter and the Wolf' as part of their science work on sound. Also they have made attractive drums and shakers but have not performed with them or made their own compositions.

201. Overall, the words of one Year 2 and another Year 5 pupil sum up the provision for music at the moment. "We just do little music" and "We used to do this often, teachers now gone so we don't do it much, I liked it when I did do a fireworks song once with drums, shakers a rainmaker and a tambourine." In further discussion with the pupils, they could not talk about pitch, timbre, tempo or dynamics.

202. The best work was completed in Years 4/5 in the autumn term when the specialist teacher was still at the school. Pupils remember this and talk confidently about their composition entitled: 'We're Flying High at Westcourt'. Pupils worked to compose and perform a piece using a range of instruments following a successful workshop visit by professional musicians as part of The Sinfonia 21 Project. From this, pupils recorded their work on compact disc and were proud to share it with one of the inspectors. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to music and crave more opportunities to have this in their weekly curriculum. Statutory requirements are not met because the subject has only limited range and depth of content.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

203. Standards of attainment are average by the ages of seven and eleven. This is the same judgement that was made in the inspection of 1997. In Year 6, attainment is average, which is an improvement upon the situation in 1997 when attainment was described as below national expectations. In both key stages, pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. No differences in the attainment or progress of boys and girls were observed in lessons. In the previous inspection, progress was judged inconsistent throughout the school.

204. At Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching and learning, based upon the evidence of one lesson, is good. This judgment is an improvement since 1997 when teaching in both key stages was found to be unsatisfactory overall. In the lesson seen in Year 1/2, there was clear

presentation of the objectives to pupils who were helped, when appropriate, by learning support assistants. The teacher established good management of pupils and this enabled time and equipment to be used well. The main games activities provided a good challenge for pupils to develop their skills of throwing, catching, hitting and skipping. They responded with enthusiasm and most made a good physical effort to improve their coordination of hand and eye by the use of the apparatus, such as bats and skipping ropes. The teacher encouraged pupils to demonstrate good practice and questioned them so that others could learn, but they were less willing to comment upon their own or the performance of others.

205. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. This judgement indicates that there has been improvement in this key stage since 1997. In a Year 5/6 lesson about using a sequence of floor and apparatus work, the teacher presented the tasks well and demonstrated what pupils were to do. The challenge, to develop a series of movement sequences, was well within the capabilities of pupils, but a small percentage made only a basic effort to develop and improve their skills. Pupils were encouraged to comment on the performance of others, but a number lacked the necessary vocabulary of physical education to do this competently. Pupils were well managed and two learning support assistants helped the teacher, although they were underused. The teacher worked hard to enthuse pupils and they responded with sound concentration, but their efforts often lacked imagination. This is because frequent changes of teachers in the past have meant that pupils have not developed confidence in themselves and a good range of physical education skills.

206. A good dance lesson in Year 4/5 resulted from clear planning, a review of what pupils had already learned and a good demonstration by the teacher. These factors made a good contribution to the motivation of pupils and the efforts they made. The teacher worked hard to maintain their interest and was rewarded by the sound progress made by them during the lesson.

207. Pupils in Year 3/4 made satisfactory progress in an outdoor games lesson when they took part in a range of activities planned to improve their performance in running, jumping and ball throwing. They were enthusiastic, and worked well together, but did not have enough opportunities to comment upon their performance or how exercise affected their bodies.

208. The school uses the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority scheme of work for physical education. This is an improvement because the previous inspection found that there was no scheme of work. Swimming is taught in Key Stage 2, but not all pupils take part as some choose games instead. Outdoor and adventurous activities are planned for the future, but currently are not part of the physical education curriculum. There are no assessment procedures to monitor the progress of pupils and, therefore, curricular planning is not developed from an analysis of their needs. The school offers a good range of after school sporting activities including competitive games. Improvements have been made to the subject because there is a clear plan of action for its development. Priorities have been identified and, although the co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, there has been insufficient time to monitor teaching. The subject does not meet statutory requirements because of the optional nature of swimming. There is a lack of organised outdoor and adventurous activities in Key Stage 2 to enrich pupils' experiences.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

209. By the ages of seven and eleven, pupils attain standards in religious education that are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This judgement differs from the 1997 inspection when they were reported as being in line with expectations at Key Stage 1 and poor at Key Stage 2. Although there is sound coverage of topics throughout the school, pupils' attainment in religious education is undermined by weaknesses in their literacy skills. Judgements in this inspection are based on classroom observations, analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. The warm, caring ethos of the school where pupils are strongly encouraged to develop a sense of self worth supports teaching and learning well in religious education. All pupils achieve satisfactorily in the subject

as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, Traveller children and pupils in the “Special Support Centre” are involved in activities and discussions and, with sensitive guidance, make sound progress.

210. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. In the 1997 inspection, it was reported to be unsatisfactory. Teaching in the subject soundly reflects the school's aims to develop an understanding of, and respect for, religious and moral values. The analysis of work shows that pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of festivals like Diwali, Christmas and Easter to believers. They have examined the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan and how it relates to their own lives. By their calm and caring approach, teachers create an atmosphere of mutual support and encouragement where pupils feel confident to develop their responses to important questions. This was evident in a Year 1/2 lesson where pupils explored the significance of Shabbat to Jewish people. The teacher built skilfully on pupils' experience of a special day to develop their ideas and there was good emphasis on key vocabulary – ‘mezuzah’, ‘Torah’, ‘rabbi’, ‘Hebrew’- so that some pupils naturally used these terms. Pupils were fascinated by the teacher's imaginative use of artefacts inscribed with Hebrew lettering which developed learning well. By the end of the lesson, all pupils were able to relate to Shabbat as a day of rest but the pace of the lesson was too fast, no time was given for consolidation and reflection and learning was lost. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness through observation and reflection on the beauty, order and mystery of nature.

211. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. In the 1997 inspection, teaching was judged to be poor. Year 3/4 pupils' visit to St Aidan's Church provided a good stimulus for learning when they re enacted a baptism and designed a font highlighting religious symbols. Pupils talked thoughtfully about the significance of baptism to Christians and the teacher drew sensitively on the symbolism of a cross that a pupil had been given as a christening present – ‘it's because I believe in Jesus’. As a result, pupils made sound gains in their understanding of how the community expresses its beliefs through baptism. In general, pupils of all ages show respect towards others and the world in which they live. They learn to value others' beliefs and show tolerance towards different faiths. Pupils in Years 4/5 discussed religions buildings in the neighbourhood such as the Muslim Cultural Centre, Chalk Pentecostal Church, St George's Church and Emmanuel Baptist Church by researching details in a variety of media sources. They had positive attitudes to the topic as they gleaned information from newspapers and directories to write a leaflet advertising places of worship as part of their literacy topic. However, although some pupils had sound referencing skills, some more able pupils marked time while others found the task too difficult before receiving support.

212. A good degree of flair and challenge was evident in a Year 5/6 lesson on art in religion. The teacher focused on the painting ‘Christ in the Carpenter's Shop’ and, by perceptive and challenging questions, drew out the characters and symbolism in the pictures from pupils' responses. ‘Why is there a dove in a Christian painting?’ ‘What does it symbolise?’ – ‘Peace’, ‘God's Spirit’. Her strong rapport with the pupils enabled them to enter unknown territory without losing confidence. They were thus able to identify the wealth of symbolism contained in the picture: the Good Shepherd, the blood on Jesus' hands and feet, the cross as a piece of split wood and the workshop mirroring the architecture of a church. In groups, they showed mature attitudes and were able to explore symbolism, such as water, in the pictures they were studying. This was the result of the teacher's own enthusiasm and lively approach that made learning stimulating, meaningful and enjoyable for her pupils. However, across the key stage, pupils' ability to understand the ways in which different religions have influenced each other, and how they affect personal behaviour and responsibility towards others, has not been sufficiently developed.

213. The subject is satisfactorily led and resourced and meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is an improvement since the 1997 inspection. Targets are appropriate including improving resources and developing the study of world religions. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and pupils' books but there is no classroom observation.

Assessment is unsatisfactory as there are no formal procedures and marking is not detailed enough to be helpful to pupils. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning in the subject. Literacy skills are underdeveloped as some of the work lacks depth and detail. Themes in collective worship reinforce topics in religious education well. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development when they have opportunities to reflect on religious stories, discover how people express their faith through the arts and gain a deeper understanding of Britain as a multi-faith society. Visitors from St Aidan's Church, Chalk Pentecostal Church and Science of the Soul provide pupils with a rich source of information about how others live and worship.