

INSPECTION REPORT

PARK WOOD INFANT SCHOOL

Rainham, Gillingham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118472

Headteacher: Mrs S Senior

Reporting inspector: Eileen Chadwick
19115

Dates of inspection: 2 - 3 July 2002

Inspection number: 197086

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Infant |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Deanwood Drive Rainham Gillingham Kent |
| Postcode: | ME8 9LP |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs M Dill |
| Date of previous inspection: | 23/06/1997 |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Park Wood Infant School educates boys and girls aged between four and seven. It is average in size as there are 211 pupils, including the 82 in Reception, who attend full time. Most pupils live in the Park Wood area but the school also attracts pupils from further afield. The surrounding area is a mixture of owner occupied and rented housing. About six per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is above average, although very few are at an early stage of learning the language. The main languages spoken other than English are Punjabi and Cantonese. Nineteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs; this is average but none have statements of educational needs. Pupils' needs are mainly learning, language and behavioural difficulties. The proportion entitled to free school meals, at ten per cent, is below average. The school is smaller than when last inspected, when there were 257 pupils. Since then the school has won Beacon status in recognition of excellence in important aspects of its work. As a result, it provides support for other schools in areas such as the Foundation Stage, curriculum development, leadership and management and staff training. The overall rate of pupil mobility is not high but its impact by Year 2 is considerable. By Year 2, 28 per cent of the pupils who originally entered in Reception had left whilst a slightly higher proportion had joined later. Pupils' overall attainment on entry is average. However, that of late entrants is often below average, especially in English, and a significant minority enters with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school which enables all of its pupils to thrive and love learning. Pupils make excellent progress and, by the time they leave the school, they reach well above average standards in reading, writing and science and very high standards in mathematics and design and technology. The excellent leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, key staff and governors lead to a constant quest for improvement. This, combined with the hard work and commitment of all the staff, results in a very high quality learning environment where all pupils have equal opportunities to do well. The quality of teaching and learning, which is nearly always very good and sometimes outstanding, results in pupils' excellent achievement. These qualities, combined with the school's excellent systems for monitoring and improving its performance, ensure that the school gives excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good quality teaching enables pupils by the end of Year 2 to reach very high standards in mathematics and well above average standards in English, science and religious education.
- The outstanding teaching in design and technology empowers Year 2 pupils to reach very high standards, to become excellent problem solvers and to develop their creativity and practical talents from the start.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent and this gives them a flying start to their learning, including a very firm foundation in the basics of reading, writing and numeracy.
- The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher, combined with the excellent management of the deputy, governors and key staff, ensure that the school has the vision and systems in place for continuous improvement.
- The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. This enables pupils to feel secure and leads to their very good behaviour and attitudes in a happy atmosphere where learning flourishes.
- The school's excellent assessment procedures have a major impact on the high standards attained because pupils are given the right level of challenge in their work.

What could be improved

This school is highly effective and the inspection team found no areas needing significant improvement. The school has excellent systems for self-evaluation and improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in June 1997 the school has made very good improvement. The key issues for action arising from that inspection have been very well addressed. For example, it has made very good progress in promoting pupils' ability to manage their own learning, in enabling them to show initiative and in developing their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society. The school's results in English,

mathematics and science have improved very well. This was reflected in the work seen during the inspection and results from an improvement in the overall quality of teaching from good to very good. The quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage is now excellent, whereas in 1997 it was good. The school's very good progress since the last inspection results from the strength of the leadership and management and the excellent teamwork of all staff. This has transformed it from a good to an excellent school. The school has a very good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | | Key |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|--|
| | all schools | | | Similar schools | |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 | |
| Reading | C | A | A | A | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| Writing | C | A | A | A | |
| Mathematics | C | A | A | A | |
| | | | | | |

The findings of the inspection reflect these results for reading and writing and show that the current Year 2 pupils are reaching well above average standards in reading and writing. Inspection indicates that standards in mathematics are very high, and higher than 2001 results. This reflects the early indications of the standards reached by Year 2 pupils in their 2002 national tests. In 2002 mathematics tests, Year 2 pupils did so well because all achieved at least Level 2, nearly all reached at least Level 2B and over a half achieved the higher Level 3. In both literacy and numeracy the school has high expectations of all pupils whatever their starting points, sets demanding targets for them and rigorously monitors their progress towards these targets. Excellent use of assessment for planning demanding work, combined with high quality teaching and very thorough homework raises standards. The school set very challenging targets in 2001 and 2002 national tests and, on both occasions, Year 2 pupils reached the set targets.

By Year 2 pupils' progress is excellent. Standards are very good in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Standards of spelling, punctuation and handwriting are excellent. Pupils write very well for a wide range of purposes and there is some excellent writing in religious education and history. In mathematics, many pupils are quick and accurate, are developing very good mental skills and can often use several methods for working out sums. Pupils apply their numeracy to other subjects very well, especially science. Pupils reach well above average standards in science, and achieve exceptional standards in physical processes. Pupils' understanding of forces and electricity is excellent because they apply this knowledge very effectively to their design and technology. Many pupils reach high standards in investigative science and are adept when solving problems. Pupils who were original entrants to Reception reach very high standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 2. Late entrants catch up very well; a significant minority with special educational needs join the school after Reception and only a minority do not achieve Level 2B or above by the end of Year 2.

Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average; pupils apply their ICT skills well in other subjects. There is a very new computer suite although this was not yet functioning during the inspection, so the teachers were limited to two computers in each class. Standards in religious education are well above average and outstanding in design and technology. Some excellent work was seen in pupils' books in history. The evidence suggests that pupils reach high standards in much of their work.

Children's progress in Reception is excellent. By the end of Reception children reach above average standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development and well above average standards in their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. The achievement of all pupils, regardless of their starting points, including boys and girls, the gifted and talented, those with English as an additional language and

pupils with special educational needs, is excellent by the time they leave the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are inquiring and enthusiastic learners. They take pride in their work and the school and try hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. This contributes greatly to the school's warm, friendly and happy atmosphere. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils' relationships with each other and all staff are very good. Pupils can work without the need for constant supervision and take some responsibility for their work. They show plenty of initiative in and out of lessons and excellent teamwork and decision making in design and technology. |
| Attendance | Very good. Pupils are punctual which enables them to make the most of school. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 – 2 |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | Excellent | Very good |

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. In a high proportion of lessons seen, 19 out of 24, it was very good or excellent and, in the rest, very nearly always good. The excellent quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and the very good quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensure that pupils' progress is rapid. Teachers provide calm, happy and very well-managed classrooms, which enable the pupils to feel safe and secure. The quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy is excellent in the Foundation Stage and very good in Years 1 and 2. The excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage provides the right balance for children to learn through talk, practical activity, play and focused class and group teaching. Teachers link all areas of learning and teach subjects, including literacy and numeracy, in exciting contexts. Strong features in Years 1 and 2 include: teachers' high expectations; very good subject knowledge; excellent lesson planning; the use of assessment to provide the right level of challenge for all; and very thorough use of homework. Teachers adjust their lessons to meet the learning needs of the pupils and provide a very good balance between learning through listening and watching and learning through doing and solving problems. Their skilful questioning ensures that pupils think for themselves. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Excellent. The school provides a broad and rich curriculum with very effective strategies for teaching speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. Extra - curricular opportunities are very good and excellent in science and technology. These make important contributions to pupils' personal development. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Excellent. Target setting and teaching are very thorough and enable the pupils to learn in small steps in literacy, numeracy and personal development. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional | Excellent assessment and rich opportunities for speaking in class and small group sessions ensure that pupils quickly become fluent and often reach |

| | |
|---|---|
| language | standards which match or exceed those attained by their peers by Year 2. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Provision for moral development is excellent whilst that for spiritual, social and cultural development is very good. This contributes significantly to the school's caring and inclusive ethos. Pupils learn to respect all members of their community through the excellent examples set by all staff. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and take great care to ensure their well-being. Assessment and procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and the use of assessment for planning work are excellent. |

Pupils flourish because of the very effective and close links the school has developed with parents. Since the last inspection, the information in pupils' annual reports has improved greatly.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Excellent. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, key staff and governors are a very effective team. They have the vision for what it is possible for pupils to achieve and provide excellent leadership and management and systems to make this happen. There is a very clear direction for continuing improvement. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Excellently. They are very supportive and yet questioning, critical friends. They have an excellent overview of strengths and priorities because of the way they gather information about the school and its progress. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Excellent. The school collects, analyses and uses assessment data very thoroughly in order to make constant improvement to its teaching methods and pupils' progress. The monitoring and support of teaching are rigorous. An important factor in all the improvements since the last inspection has been the school's ability to thoroughly and accurately evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and take effective action. |
| The strategic use of resources | Excellent. All staff and resources are managed very well for their maximum impact on raising standards. The new computer suite is a most valuable innovation. Teachers and all staff are valued as the school's best resource, and rigorous and regular training ensures they are able to consistently provide high quality provision. Financial management is excellent. The school has excellent systems in place to ensure that it obtains best value when purchasing goods and services and for evaluating the impact of spending on raising standards. The high quality learning resources are excellently used. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy and they like school. • The quality of the teaching and children's excellent progress. • Children's good behaviour. • The very strong leadership by the headteacher. • The warm family atmosphere and strong sense of community. Each child feels special. • How their views are taken into account. | There were no significant areas of concern about the school. |

The inspection team agrees with all parents' positive comments and, throughout the report, has given examples of why this school achieves excellence and well deserves the title of "Beacon School".

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good quality teaching enables pupils by the end of Year 2 to reach very high standards in mathematics and well above average standards in English, science and religious education.

1. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected standards as well as higher levels in speaking and listening, reading and writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school is impressive. Pupils enter Reception with broadly average levels of attainment, although this covers a broad spread from above to well below average and includes a small number who have personal, social and emotional difficulties. The impact of mobility on Year 2 is high. In the current Year 2 nearly one third entered later than Reception, having attended other schools, and the school's records show these pupils often had special educational needs on entry. Moreover, a significant minority of the original entrants to Reception had left by Year 2 and the attainment of these pupils was at least average and sometimes above. This means the school has to work even harder to raise the overall attainment of its pupils. The school does this exceptionally well and, by Year 2, the achievement of all pupils, including that of original entrants and those who enter later, is excellent. This is because the school very successfully enables all its pupils, including high as well as lower attaining pupils to succeed.
2. Important factors in the school's success are its excellent systems for assessing, recording, monitoring, evaluating and improving pupils' progress. The school's expectation of what pupils can achieve are high and it sets demanding yet realistic targets for each and every pupil. Other very important factors include the way the school provides the right emotional climate for learning and the way it enables pupils to develop high esteem and learn to be self-motivated and responsible for their own work. These factors, combined with high quality teaching and learning, all play major roles in securing pupils' excellent achievement.
3. The school, rightly, devotes much attention to developing pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing and numeracy skills. Teachers have a very good understanding of how to implement the literacy hour and ensure the skills of speaking and listening develop alongside and underpin reading and writing. In Year 1 an excellent literacy lesson systematically built upon pupils' previous work when the teacher had enabled the pupils to write story introductions about "Floppy". In this session the teacher taught the pupils how to develop ideas for "middles of stories" and to generate ideas for descriptive words. She used group work very effectively, ensuring that all pupils had the opportunity to generate ideas, make a contribution and to learn from each other. The teacher had an excellent understanding of different pupils' capabilities and her questioning extended the thinking of all. The challenging and interesting nature of the work enabled pupils to learn rapidly. The careful build-up of skills over time, and from one lesson to the next, is a very strong feature of the teaching in all lessons and leads to pupils gradually acquiring skills and achieving much success.
4. By Year 2, pupils have confidence in their own abilities in speaking, reading, writing and spelling and can evaluate and improve their work. Standards are high - for example, many read fluently and write very neatly in well-joined and even script. Their spelling is excellent and results from a very structured approach to teaching phonics from the earliest age when speech, sounds and writing are always linked and taught in appropriate steps. There is a strong emphasis upon relevance and the pupils understanding what they are expected to achieve. Time during the literacy hour is often used very effectively and pupils spend maximum time on learning.
5. In a very good Year 2 lesson on punctuation, the pupils learned how to use speech marks. The three main parts of the lesson were very carefully planned so that each part rigorously linked with the previous one. The very thorough teaching of knowledge and skills provided the right balance of new learning and enabled the pupils to consolidate what they had learned. For example, during the introduction the pupils were shown how to use speech marks and carried out a shared text activity where they all inserted speech marks, first as a class and then in pairs. During the group work the pupils applied their learning to write new sentences with appropriate use of speech marks or, if working at a lower level, to insert them in the right places in sentences. The whole-class plenary session enabled the pupils to apply their learning to a new situation when the pupils worked in pairs

and used whiteboards to write out sentences from different “speech bubbles” using the correct punctuation. They were also asked to include exclamation or question marks, skills they had learned in a previous lesson. Finally, the way the pupils used expression and humour as they read out their sentences, using the right emphasis for either an exclamation or a question, made learning fun and memorable.

6. In a very good mathematics lesson, in another Year 2 class, the same very good teaching practice that is seen consistently through the school was observed. This includes: very good management of pupils; a good use of a range of teaching and learning styles, including opportunities for pupils to learn through watching and listening as well as by talking, investigating and solving problems. Teachers’ strong subject knowledge, high expectations and an excellent match of pupils’ work to their previous knowledge complete this very favourable picture.
7. Teachers make excellent use of practical resources and the Year 2 mathematics lesson was no exception. In this lesson the pupils were learning to tell the time to the nearest five minutes and to change analogue times to digital times. The teacher provided excellent links between all the mathematics National Curriculum targets and began the lesson by a warm-up counting in “bundles of fives”. This enabled the pupils to count time in units of five minutes. The quick pace for counting forward or backwards from any number, or recognising missing numbers was appropriate as many pupils are achieving at Level 3 by this stage. The teachers’ very good questioning made pupils think carefully, be constantly alert and actively involved in the lesson - for example in response to the question “Why are we stopping at 60?” The use of individual small clocks for pupils, and a large one for the teacher to demonstrate, enabled the pupils to learn through practical work. The teacher’s questions were very well matched to the needs of the few lower attaining pupils - for example, the questions enabled them to tell the time accurately by observing precisely the position of the hands “How do we know it is not half past two?” The teacher’s questions equally included higher attaining pupils, “If this clock was half an hour late, what time would it be on the digital clock?”
8. No class lessons were seen in science but examination of pupils’ work showed a very good emphasis upon pupils learning through practical work and all their senses. There is thorough teaching of investigative skills and the broad range of knowledge that is required for National Curriculum. The way Year 2 pupils apply their investigative skills, understanding of materials and physical processes to design and technology is excellent. In religious education, by Year 2, pupils have a very good understanding of forgiveness and the need to feel sorry and of major Christian festivals and those of other faiths. They know about important stories from the New and Old Testaments and understand the stories behind some major festivals - for example, Divali. Pupils are given many practical experiences for learning about other faiths to make the learning relevant: drama, music, designing and making artefacts enable the pupils to understand the different festivals and stories. The pupils’ understanding of other faiths was a weakness at the time of the last inspection and the school has made very good progress in addressing this key issue. Pupils apply their writing skills very well in science and exceptionally well in religious education.
9. Writing and research across the curriculum are used as very effective tools for providing enrichment for more able pupils. One pupil has attained Level 4 in writing this year, which is very high attainment indeed for pupils of this age. Examination of more able pupils’ work confirms that some pupils’ ability to write for a range of purposes with a wide vocabulary, accurate spelling and punctuation and well formed handwriting script is exceptional. The school also provides very good opportunities for more capable pupils in mathematics. Computer programmes are used very effectively for this during lessons and for enrichment at lunchtime. The Young Investigators’ Club for science and technology provides excellent enrichment for all pupils, including the very able.

The outstanding teaching in design and technology empowers Year 2 pupils to reach very high standards, to become excellent problem solvers and to develop their creativity and practical talents from the start.

10. Design and technology has a very high profile in this school. It is valued as a subject in its own right and as a vehicle for enabling pupils to express and develop their creativity and to learn important practical, decision-making and social skills. Throughout the school, pupils are given opportunities to design and make with a wide range of materials, including textiles, food and construction materials such as paper, card, reclaimed wood and construction kits. However, it is the excellent teaching of

designing and making with construction materials in Year 2 that is leading to very high standards. A specialist teaches design and technology to all the Year 2 pupils. Her excellent subject knowledge and understanding of how best to teach design and technology rigorously to young pupils are excellent. This is leading to very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and rigorous subject teaching enables them to excel.

11. All aspects of the process of designing and making are rigorously taught and learned and the teaching of knowledge for design and technology is impressive. Through the use of demanding construction kits, pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge of mechanisms and structures as well as their manipulative skills. There is an excellent range of construction kits for this purpose and these are graded through the school in order of complexity so that pupils gradually tackle more difficult kits. By Year 2 pupils have an excellent working knowledge of simple machines, including levers, pulleys and belts as well as wheels and axles. The high level of the teaching of science knowledge through these kits is providing excellent enrichment opportunities for very able pupils and for those who have a talent for technology.
12. By Year 2, the great majority of pupils are achieving at the higher Level 3 and some of their design work is at Level 4. This is excellent attainment. When designing and making models to move one metre pupils freely generate ideas for vehicles which could fit this criterion. Pupils suggest their own ideas for the models they would each like to make, for example a caravan, an ambulance, or a racing car. Pupils have a very good understanding of what they are trying to achieve and establish their own criteria for success - for example, an ambulance must have wide doors which can take a stretcher, an ambulance must be able to travel fast and an ambulance must have a light. Pupils have an outstanding ability to show their ideas by drawing and to plan the materials they will use. By Year 2 pupils are fully responsible for their own work, including the order in which it should be done and manage time constraints very well. Pupils show excellent ability to select, cut, shape, join and combine neatly a wide range of materials, including balsa wood, wood strip, dowel, textile scraps and card. Pupils use a wide range of tools safely, independently, correctly and with precision. Throughout the process pupils evaluate their work and reflect on whether they are meeting their purpose and, if not, how they can improve their work.
13. Pupils' excellent skills in using the design, make and test process is due to the structured teaching of the process at each stage, from an early age. This involves class instruction on different aspects of the process - for example, how to communicate design ideas by drawing and how to use simple tools safely. In an excellent Year 2 lesson seen, the teacher's main purpose was to ensure pupils were able to work within time constraints during the process of making their models. The teacher ensured the pupils fully understood the purpose of their lesson. This enabled the pupils to make very effective use of their time, taking complete responsibility for their own work. Some excellent teaching of evaluation skills was seen when the teacher stopped the class during the designing and making process. She asked the whole class to reflect on their work and then asked individual pupils to talk about what they were trying to achieve, the problems they were solving, what was working well and what they still needed to improve. This resulted in some high level thinking by the pupils and enabled them to develop the skills of evaluating and improving their work as they went along. This was only possible because of the gradual teaching of the design process from an early age and the excellent use of role models so that pupils can learn from each other. The excellent match of work to pupils' needs is a product of excellent assessment of their skills and talents and teachers' excellent subject knowledge.
14. Pupils apply literacy and numeracy very well to design and technology. They use computers for enhancing their design and technology - for example, pupils have used graphics to generate ideas for wrapping paper for presents and for designing party invitations. Their use of art is very good. Pupils' ability to use their drawing skills for communicating designs is excellent, whilst the use of art for finishing their work - for example, for adding texture and colour - is good. Pupils' application of science to design and technology is exceptional. For example, pupils have an excellent understanding of different types of forces, including friction, and their effects on movement and they use the fair test spontaneously during the process of designing and making. Pupils were observed to test their models to see if they could travel one metre and made comparisons spontaneously between the effects of travelling on different surfaces or noted the difference in movement of two different models when given the same push. Throughout teachers capitalise on the cross-curricular nature of design and technology and its power in making learning in other subjects relevant. The school has maintained the excellent work and teaching and learning observed at the time of last inspection in design and technology.

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent and this gives the children a flying start to their learning, including a very firm foundation in the basics of reading, writing and numeracy.

15. There are two intakes into Reception each year because of the local education authority's admission procedures. Children with their fifth birthday between September and the end of February enter Reception in September. Those born between the beginning of March and the end of August enter the following January. In the current Reception classes there are 82 children. Only 30 of these entered in September because many children have birthdays after March 1st. Children are taught in age-related Reception classes that are based on September or January intakes. However, on entry to Year 1, the classes contain a complete mix of pupils and are not based on the term of their birthdays. On entry to Reception most children have attended the pre-school, on a part time basis, which is on the same site as the school. Analysis shows that on entry to Reception children's attainment is average overall but spans the whole ability range. There is a significant minority who are below or well below average in their speaking and listening skills and their personal and social development and a slightly smaller proportion who are above average. Very few are well above average on entry.
16. For the past 18 months, in the Foundation Stage, the school has been following an approach to learning called the Reggio Emilia approach. This emphasises the importance of children's emotional development and building on their natural learning drive, their role as active learners and the ways in which they naturally learn. The methods used by the school entirely fit with the curriculum that is nationally recommended for this age. The school implements a very high quality curriculum which leads fully to the targets for this age, the Early Learning Goals, and provides opportunities for higher attaining children to make a start on learning the National Curriculum. There is excellent leadership of the Foundation Stage and the co-ordinator's teaching sets an excellent example to other Reception teachers. The teachers and their classroom assistants work together very effectively to provide very high quality learning experiences that encourage the children to learn through all their senses and talk. Children are enabled to learn through practical work and to take an active part in the learning process. Throughout, planning of the curriculum and the organisation of the children's learning and management of their behaviour are excellent. Relationships are very supportive and this promotes a very happy, caring and purposeful learning environment in which children thrive and develop their love of and capacity for learning.
17. Teaching and learning are excellent. In nearly all lessons observed they were very good and in a half were excellent; this is an unusually high proportion. There are many very stimulating activities which help the children to learn through talk, practical enquiry and play as well as through focused whole-class and group teaching. The right balance is achieved between these different approaches to learning. The whole emphasis is upon harnessing the children's inquisitiveness and strong desire to master new skills. The development of children's language and their personal and social skills receives high priority and occurs in a happy, safe and secure emotional climate for learning. Teachers ensure that all children, regardless of their starting point, have equal opportunities for learning. This is the result of excellent assessment, recording and the use of assessment to plan relevant and well-matched work. All Reception staff work hard to ensure that everyone achieves success and has a good self-image and a sense of worth. From the start, children are encouraged to be independent and are very well supported in this. Children develop a thorough knowledge of school routines and, by the end of their Reception year, can learn equally well through independent choice and play or through listening and learning as a whole class. Children learn the important skills of self-evaluation through discussing their work with their teachers and examining what they have done. By the end of the Reception year the literacy and numeracy strategies are fully in place and children are very well prepared to experience the full literacy and numeracy hours on entry to Year 1.
18. All areas of learning are very well linked and none are taught in isolation. The rich opportunities for children's language development, combined with excellent practical resources, enable the children to learn through talking and doing. Most children in the current Reception year have only had two terms in Reception by the time they enter Year 1. As a result of excellent teaching and learning all children make excellent progress, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining children. By the end of their Reception year children attain above average standards in their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development and well above average standards in their personal and emotional and social development, knowledge and understanding of

the world, creative development and physical development.

19. In communication, language and literacy children listen very attentively, often with good comprehension. They enjoy stories and rhymes, making up their own rhyming patterns and using new language. Children know how to handle books carefully and have developed a love of books. Children can read many words and many have progressed to reading sentences. They have a good understanding of sounds and many can recognise sounds at the beginnings and ends of words as well as middle letters of simple words. Children's writing is good. It is often well formed and children often make good attempts at writing simple words and sentences for themselves. The standards attained are the result of consistently excellent teaching.
20. Children are captivated by books and enjoy reading because of the very high quality opportunities provided. This was seen in an excellent lesson based on the Big Book, "Gran and the big red crab". The book was very relevant to the children's interests as they were studying a topic about the seaside. Children had been given rich practical experiences through visiting Botany Bay, near Broadstairs, and had observed crab shells and small freshwater crabs in special tanks in the classroom. They had developed a very strong interest in this topic and were very keen to see what happened to Gran at the seaside. The children's enthusiasm, the high emphasis upon relevance and meaning, combined with the excellent teaching of reading skills in the lesson observed, and over time, resulted in pupils' rapid learning. The teacher taught reading for meaning, recognition of specific words and sounds with writing excellently throughout. The teacher had carefully covered some of the words in the Big Book in order to develop the children's reading skills. She encouraged the children to develop their strategies for working out a covered word, by using the picture and sentence cues. Individual children were chosen to write their chosen words on the slip of paper covering the word. The way all the children were keen to write and helped other children to sound out the "mystery" words ensured the active involvement of all. All teachers capitalise on children's natural capacity for learning rapidly from each other and their use of role models is very well thought out.
21. Similarly, children's natural enthusiasm for learning is harnessed by the high quality mathematics teaching, encouraging children to thoroughly enjoy mathematics and solving problems. In an excellent class session for children in a younger Reception class the children were learning how to add and subtract to ten. The teacher used a wide range of approaches including opportunities for the children to learn through their different senses, a game-like atmosphere and high quality artefacts to engage the children's interest and to be actively involved throughout. The teacher used a number of situations for teaching the same concept so that the children could apply their understanding to a new situation. In "Bears in a tin" the teacher focused the children's minds on counting the sounds of small toy bears falling in the tin as the children had their eyes closed. During the initial class warm-up the teacher and children counted to ten and beyond and then played a game, "Numbers to ten". The teacher dropped a number of bears in the tin and the children enjoyed working out the number still needed to make ten, making use of their fingers for counting. Another activity involved physical movement when pupils used "number stepping stones". In this case the children were asked to step on a number and to calculate where they should stand if they had to move to "two less, three more" etc. This was a very effective way of building children's interest and skills in adding and subtracting.
22. In an excellent numeracy lesson for the oldest children the teacher, once again, made excellent use of practical resources. This time the children counted spots on large toy ladybirds, adding and subtracting the spots on both sides. There was an excellent match of work during group work and several very high attaining children moved on to add and subtract problems with numbers to 20. There was excellent practical support for all children during group work and very good opportunities for the gradual development of written number sums. The use of whiteboards is greatly facilitating the development of this.
23. There are many rich language opportunities linked with science and technology which map particularly into knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. For example, the children have collected shells and closely observed small objects from the beach. They have identified many of their findings and have gone on to design and make Plaster of Paris pictures for science, design and technology and geography. Children are intrigued with the changes in the material as Plaster of Paris sets. Earlier in the term the children grew their own hairy caterpillars, using grass seeds, and investigated the conditions for growth. The design of play settings is often excellent and some play corners have been turned into underwater caverns with magical blue drapes to give blue light. Collections of seaweed, driftwood, shells and opportunities to

design and make boats stimulate children's imagination, natural curiosity and capacity for solving problems. During their creative play children's imagination, curiosity and capacity for learning rapidly from each other were all seen to be naturally stimulated. There are many high quality opportunities for the children to develop their creativity and their physical skills. Children learn to use the computer confidently and competently and throughout all areas of learning their ideas are valued.

The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher, combined with the excellent management of the deputy, governors and key staff, ensure that the school has the vision and systems in place for continuous improvement.

24. At the heart of the school's vision is the strong belief that in teaching all pupils how to succeed, and to take some responsibility for their own learning, learners for life are created. The vision for excellence in all areas of school life, the high expectations set for pupils and the importance of giving the children the right foundation in their Early Years is shared by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and very clear direction for school improvement. The systems of self-evaluation that have been developed since the last inspection are rigorous. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors work closely together as a high performing team and make excellent use of these systems to improve the school's performance. This has resulted in the very good improvements in standards and in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. In the 1997 inspection the headteacher's leadership and management of the school were described as strong and effective and ably supported by what was, then, a relatively new governing body. Since then the school has moved forward as there has been no complacency and has successfully embraced considerable change.
25. The development of systems to help the school to improve standards has enabled the school to move forward at a very good pace. The school has excellent systems for tracking and analysing standards in national and other assessments and for using this information as a tool for improving its provision. This has been demonstrated by how standards have been raised very well since the last inspection. The involvement of governors and all teachers in systematic review ensures that all are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and everyone works together to the same purpose. The performance of different groups of pupils, including boys, girls, those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, is tracked very thoroughly in the core subjects and improvements in provision are implemented in order to improve pupils' progress. An instance of this is that, whilst the pupils are already achieving high standards in literacy, the school is considering setting for some lessons each week in literacy and numeracy in Year 2. The purpose of this is to provide a consistent match of work for higher and very able pupils throughout each lesson. It is also to enable the pupils with special educational needs, who are often late entrants to the school, to progress in small steps, especially in reading and writing, more systematically in all parts of the literacy hour.
26. The main strengths of the management of the school include the thorough monitoring, evaluation and support of teaching by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the subject co-ordinators. The school places much emphasis upon staff development and the development of teachers' subject knowledge. This is achieved through "in house" training as well as attending training courses provided by other specialists. Teachers are given good opportunities for seeing their colleagues teach, so good practice is shared. There is very effective delegation of responsibilities to subject co-ordinators who play a key role in bringing about improvements and raising standards. Subject co-ordinators have a very strong role in curriculum planning in the long, medium and shorter term. This provides a thorough basis for strong subject teaching. The results of teachers' lesson evaluations and the headteacher's and the deputy headteacher's weekly work scrutinises feed back into curriculum planning so this can be, and is, amended in order to improve the match of learning to pupils' needs if necessary. The headteacher gives staff the freedom to introduce new ideas and to develop their talents to the full. The exemplary teaching by the headteacher in design and technology, her excellent understanding of the progress of each child and how pupils best learn are very fine examples of leadership by example.
27. The close and very effective links with parents foster the pupils' excellent progress and the ease with which children adapt to school from their first day in Reception. Programmes for parents to help with homework are very thorough and this is having a significant impact on pupils' progress. The governors are very knowledgeable and they work in excellent partnership with the headteacher and her staff; they are supportive and make an excellent contribution to shaping the direction of the school. They are very well organised and have their own methods of finding out how well the school is performing as well as analysing data with key staff and receiving reports from the headteacher and subject co-ordinators. They visit the school regularly and observe lessons, with a clear focus for their visits. There are very good procedures for checking how satisfied parents are with the school, and evaluation by staff of major initiatives also inform governors' decision making.

28. Budget planning is closely linked to the very good school improvement plan, and educational priorities are supported through careful financial management. The cost of running the school is high but this includes funding for Beacon status and for the school to provide training for other schools. The school carried forward a very high contingency sum in the last financial year, as this was the result of the school's saving for an ICT suite. Spending on this has been very wise as, whilst the level of classroom ICT resources before the installation of the new suite was sound, this new initiative has kept the school at the forefront of developments in modern technology. The contingency fund predicted for the next academic year is much lower - though, it is a little higher than in many schools. This is due to prudent budgeting, the governors are concerned to keep the numbers of pupils in each class low as their analysis shows this has a major impact on standards. The school cannot always fully predict the numbers entering Reception in January, the extent of pupils' mobility and needs to keep some reserves. Control and management of expenditure are very rigorous and care is taken to ensure value for money is obtained when purchases are made. The effect of purchases on raising standards is also rigorously evaluated - for example, the use of the high quality learning resources which have been purchased for the school.

The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. This enables pupils to feel secure and leads to their very good behaviour and attitudes in a happy atmosphere where learning flourishes.

29. The pupils are inspired to do their best because of the very good attention to their personal development and the development of high self-esteem in all pupils. The school's aims include trusting and believing in every pupil's ability to achieve well and empowering them to do so. The school does this most effectively. The school also aims for the pupils to be independent learners and it is very successful in achieving this aim. This area has improved very well since the last inspection when, although pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour were described as good, more opportunities for personal study and to work independently were needed.
30. The school has made very good progress in improving opportunities for independent study. For example, the approach to teaching and learning in Reception now includes substantial planning for self-initiated learning through play and for developing children's ability to take some responsibility for their own learning. This was seen in creative development when the children played with "magic" coloured sand; they children carefully collected water in jugs and added this to their brightly coloured sand without the need for direct supervision. In design and technology, by Year 2, the pupils take full responsibility for their own learning. In many lessons teachers use a good range of teaching styles, which include opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or in small teams and to learn to make some of their own decisions. Pupils of all ages can work with the minimum of supervision when required to do so - for example, in the literacy and numeracy hours.
31. There are many opportunities for the pupils to be involved in the life of the school, to take responsibility and to manage their own behaviour. The school has provided some high quality artefacts for the pupils to use and play with at playtimes and lunchtimes. These artefacts provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their curiosity and to make their own decisions. Pupils are expected to successfully manage their own behaviour when playing with or examining the artefacts, and they succeed in this. The artefacts are popular with the pupils and range from beautifully presented butterfly collections to mechanical parts which the pupils can disassemble to find out how they work. There are excellent opportunities for the pupils to use computers for mathematics challenges at lunchtimes. This programme stimulates all pupils to want to achieve because they work at their own level. It also provides a particularly good level of challenge for very able mathematicians. Pupils are responsible for their own behaviour and work when using the library and know how to record and check their scores on the computer challenges to see how well they have done. There are very good opportunities for the pupils to express ideas and to put these into practice.
32. Warm and caring relationships and commitment to each pupil ensure that all have a happy and successful start to school. There are close links with the pre-school, which is on the same site. Very good induction procedures enable the children to make a natural transition to main school. The headteacher and all the staff know their pupils very well and show great concern for their personal as well as their academic development. Pupils are enabled to feel secure in the calm atmosphere and

very attractive, well-organised environment and the care that is shown for their well-being by all who work in the school.

33. There is very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Daily assemblies play a very important part in the spiritual development of pupils. Prayer is a regular feature. There is an appropriate atmosphere for prayer, a strong Christian approach and very good opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures. There is very good provision for pupils to develop and express ideas in assembly and in the curriculum and to develop a sense of wonder. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent and promoted by the very good examples set by adults and the very good relationships between all involved in the life of the school. Pupils are given a very clear moral code, and daily assemblies and religious education play a strong part in this. The school rules are few but are understood and adhered to by the pupils. Pupils help to design their own class rules and this gives them ownership. Teachers consistently manage pupils' behaviour very well and apply the behaviour policy very successfully. A minority of pupils with special educational needs have behavioural difficulties. These pupils are provided with excellent opportunities for developing their self-esteem, emotional security and adapting to school life. The monitoring of their progress is very rigorous and the results are used to provide support in order to secure their adaptation to school.
34. Pupils are given very good opportunities for their social development through visits and visitors and by co-operating in many situations. From the earliest age children are given opportunities to take some responsibility, for example, Reception children help to prepare the tables for lunch. Many pupils take part in the very good range of extra-curricular activities, such as the Science Young Investigators' club, the gardening club, the construction kit club, the French club, the Salsa dancing and the recorder club. These activities greatly enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils confidently make presentations in assembly - for example, during the inspection the Year 2 recorder groups gave a musical performance and were completely responsible for introducing the pieces they played. Another group of pupils practised for a musical history class assembly on "Oliver", with opportunities for everyone to take part and perform. Pupils support charities: for example, they have been taking great care not to over-sharpen their pencils as they have been saving pencils to send to an orphanage in Egypt.
35. Opportunities for their cultural development and increasing multi-cultural awareness are also very good. The latter aspect has improved very well since the last previous inspection, when there were weaknesses. During this inspection, in religious education, Reception children learned about the Hindu festival of Raksha, and the need to show love and to care for brothers and sisters. This was made very meaningful to the children as they each designed and made a bracelet, a Rakhi, to give to a friend or brother or sister to show their care for others.

The school's excellent assessment procedures have a major impact on the high standards that pupils achieve because pupils are given the right level of challenge in their work.

36. An important reason why standards are so high, and are still improving, has been the school's ability to accurately analyse the reasons for its performance and identify and remedy its weaknesses. The school has developed very good tools for this self-analysis. Assessment is used to guide the teaching so that all pupils reach their full potential and to raise standards.
37. Teachers carefully assess pupils' performance from when they first enter to when they leave by setting shorter and longer term targets for their pupils. This often involves gradually setting more demanding targets than those set at the time of pupils' baseline assessment because of the rapid progress pupils make. It is commendable that, whilst few attain high standards in their baseline assessment, by the end of Year 2 many achieve Level 3 in all three subjects and several pupils were entered for Level 4 in English. In many cases pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 exceeds the prediction made from their baseline in Reception. Assessment is very regular and very thorough. It involves all teachers and the headteacher and deputy teacher also monitor pupils' progress and the impact of teaching upon this. The teachers' lesson plans set out key lesson targets and teachers' very regular evaluations identify those pupils who are achieving the set targets, those who need more challenge and those pupils who are not achieving appropriately. This information is used in

determining future work. Subject co-ordinators support and advise colleagues on any adjustments that are needed to planning. This means that subjects are rigorously taught and the inspection showed that lessons are very well matched to pupils' learning needs.

38. The school has a number of useful tools for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in relation to their peers. In literacy these include: the Middle Infant Screening Test for identifying how the pupils are progressing in using phonics in independent spelling and writing; records of pupils' reading progress from which targets are drawn up and shared with parents. The school also uses half-termly assessment for checking pupils' progress; any low or very high scores are quickly picked up by the senior management team and are discussed with parents and additional help or enrichment is provided. A key factor in the school's success is that, if predictions of 2C are made, and pupils are not on the special educational needs register, these pupils are monitored by the senior management team and are given support to enable them to reach at least 2B. Examples of this rigorous monitoring were seen for late entrants when the standards of pupils' work in their previous schools had sometimes been poor. The support, monitoring and teaching of these pupils ensured that they made excellent progress. The pupils quickly responded to the messages and targets set by the teachers' marking and after only a comparatively short time in school there was no comparison between the poor work they were doing on entry and what was currently being achieved.
39. The marking of pupils' work is excellent. There is a clear policy and this is adhered to consistently through the school. In all the books examined marking was supportive, interesting to read and attractive, gave the pupils a clear picture of how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve and was well matched to pupils' levels of understanding. Pupils were making excellent progress over time because of a very accurate diagnosis of what was needed to help them improve. Since the last inspection the school has made excellent improvements in the quality of marking, which at that time did not inform pupils how they could best improve their work.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

40. This school is highly effective and the inspection team found no areas for significant improvement. The school has excellent systems for self-evaluation and improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 24 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 12 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 8 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 33 | 46 | 17 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | YR – Y2 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 211 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 21 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | YR – Y2 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 40 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 13 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 12 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 18 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.5 |
| National comparative data | 5.6 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | 2001 | 37 | 34 | 71 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 36 | 37 | 37 |
| | Girls | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| | Total | 69 | 70 | 70 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 97 (97] | 99 (99) | 99 (100) |
| | National | 84 (83) | 86 (84) | 91 (90) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 36 | 37 | 36 |
| | Girls | 33 | 33 | 34 |
| | Total | 69 | 70 | 70 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 97 (97) | 99 (99) | 99 (100) |
| | National | 85 (84) | 89(88) | 89 (88 |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 3 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 3 |
| White | 201 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 4 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 9 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 23.4 |
| Average class size | 23.4 |

Education support staff: YR – Y2

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 4 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 63 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| Financial year | 2001/2 |
|----------------|--------|

| | |
|--|---------|
| | £ |
| Total income | 485,864 |
| Total expenditure | 465,654 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,401 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 84,406 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 104,616 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 4 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 211 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 75 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 65 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 56 | 40 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 45 | 49 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 39 | 48 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 65 | 33 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 71 | 27 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 71 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 59 | 39 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 52 | 37 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 64 | 34 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 51 | 47 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 35 | 37 | 8 | 5 | 15 |

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting said that their children made excellent progress, that leadership and management by the headteacher were excellent and that they hoped that high standards would be maintained after she retired at the end of this term.