

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST MINSTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sheerness, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118438

Headteacher: Mr Alan Bayford

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Rowe
1695

Dates of inspection: 5th – 9th June, 2000

Inspection number: 198938

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Georges Avenue Sheerness Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Wood
Date of previous inspection:	8 th – 11 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Brian Rowe	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
John Brasier	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?
Christopher Taylor	Team inspector	English Design and technology Information and communication technology	
Michael Lafford	Team inspector	Geography History Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Brian Downes	Team inspector	Science Religious education	
Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Art Music Special educational needs Under-fives	

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House 33 Kingsway
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

West Minster Primary School is a mixed community school for the age range four – nine. The majority of pupils come from local Swale Housing Association homes and many come from families who have low incomes. The area is one of high social deprivation. There are 248 pupils on roll (124 boys and 124 girls). The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is very low compared to national averages and one pupil does not speak English as a first language. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals (35 per cent) is much higher than the national average.

An analysis of pupils' attainment on entry from reviewing their Key Stage 1 national test scores and those in other standardised tests taken at school indicates that levels of attainment are low compared to the national average. Many pupils enter reception with little or no experience of playgroups or nurseries. There are 144 (60 per cent) pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register, very much higher than the national average. Six have Statements for Special Educational Needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

West Minster Primary School is a very good and highly effective school. It achieves academic standards that are as good as they should be in relation to the pupils' ability on entry to the school and, in reading, they are better. Pupils have very positive attitudes about the school and are keen to improve their own performance. They are mostly well behaved and form positive relationships with each other and their teachers. All the teaching observed was satisfactory and a high proportion was good or better. The overall good quality of teaching ensures that pupils are learning well. The school has developed a broad curriculum to meet the needs of all the pupils. Some aspects, such as the provision for pupils with special educational needs, are particularly effective. There is a high level of care and support for pupils, and the school has established very good procedures to monitor and support pupils' academic and personal development. The vast majority of parents regard the school highly. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection and is keen on finding further ways to improve. The headteacher, very well supported by the assistant headteacher, provides outstanding management and leadership. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has innovative long-term plans to maintain the improvements. The school is cost-effective and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raising levels of pupils' attainment from a low starting point;• Improving standards of reading so that they are close to the national average by the time pupils leave;• Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has ensured excellent improvement in school;• High quality of teaching which ensures that pupils make good progress as they move through the school;• Reviewing, monitoring and assessment procedures;• Promotes the personal development and positive behaviour of pupils;• Provides a high level of care and a safe environment for the pupils;• Develops strong links with parents and the local community.

What could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role of the governing body;• Working with the local education authority (LEA) and other agencies to provide pre-school educational provision;• Developing the use of information and communication technology to support all subjects in the curriculum;• Providing additional support for reception aged pupils

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous OFSTED inspection took place in December 1997. The school has made excellent improvement since that inspection.

The vast majority of the key issues identified in the previous report have been addressed appropriately, together with other important aspects of school development. These other aspects include improving the levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of management, the review and monitoring procedures, attendance, links with parents and the local community and the provision of an information and communication technology suite. The only issue from the last inspection not to be fully addressed is the strategic involvement of the governing body.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Reading	E	E*	E	C
Writing	E	E*	E*	E
Mathematics	E	E	E*	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

At the time of the inspection 35 per cent of the pupils were claiming free school meals. For the purpose of comparing West Minster Primary School with other similar schools the 50 + per cent free school meals benchmark data has been used. This is for two reasons: the school has a large number of pupils with special educational needs (60 per cent, which is well above the national average) and also it has a large proportion of pupils who join or leave the school throughout the academic year.

Compared to national results, in the 1999 Key Stage 1 tests, attainment in writing and mathematics were in the lowest five per cent of all schools. In reading, results were well below the national average. During the years from 1996 to 1999, the school's results did not keep pace with rising national trends. Unconfirmed scores from the recent Year 2000 tests indicate a significant improvement in the attainment for reading, writing and mathematics but they remain below national expectations. The 1999 results compared to the achievement of similar schools, shows that attainment in reading was average, mathematics below average and writing was well below average. The Year 2000 results are likely to indicate a significant improvement when compared to similar schools' averages. The quality of work seen in lessons confirms the improvements indicated by these most recent test scores. Throughout the school, the pupils are developing their competency in literacy and numeracy well. This is especially so for the higher attaining pupils. The levels of attainment in Year 4, from the results of standardised tests and the work in pupils' books, are close to national averages in English and below average in mathematics and science. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in either key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their ability. Compared to their attainment on entry to the school, the pupils achieve very well, surpassing the targets that the school has set itself.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school. They are keen to get down to work and show enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. It is very good on the playground and around the school, and also in most lessons. There are however, a minority of lessons where the pupils take too long to settle or the buzz of chatter interrupts the concentration of others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Pupils get on well with each other and are proud of the school. Personal development is good, but limited by inadequate opportunity for independent study.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Over the last three years the school has improved the level of attendance significantly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5 – 7 years	Aged 7- 9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	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.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It was satisfactory or better in 100 per cent of lessons, and good or better in 60 per cent of lessons. In nine per cent of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. Given the context of the school this is a remarkably good profile. The quality of teaching in the reception classes and in Key Stages 1 and 2 is equally good, although there is some variation between classes. Throughout the school, English, mathematics and science are taught especially well, and the quality of teaching in the other subjects seen was good. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good. There is no significant variation in the quality of teaching in different year groups. The strengths of the teaching are the quality of planning that matches suitable work for pupils of all abilities, teachers' high expectations and their ability to manage the pupils. On a few occasions the pace of lessons was too slow, usually as a result of teachers talking for too long in the introduction.

The quality of pupils' learning is usually good as a direct consequence of the high quality teaching. From when they first enter the school, pupils begin to respond well to the opportunities given to them to learn and play and form positive relationships. All but the higher attaining pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration and interest without close support from either the teacher or learning support assistant. Noise levels in some classes become too intrusive on occasions.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at each key stage. The curriculum has good breadth and balance and the school strives to ensure that all pupils have equal access to it.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. They have access to all the opportunities within the school and good support from teachers and classroom assistants. Parents are kept well informed of pupils' progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Overall, provision is very good: spiritual development is satisfactory; cultural development is good; social and moral development are very good. Good extra-curricular opportunities and trips enhance pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school provides a safe and secure environment with good supervision at all times. Child protection procedures are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding. The headteacher, very well supported by other key staff, provides outstanding leadership for the school. The headteacher is committed to the development of the school and raising the attainment of the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors collaborate with the headteacher in planning the strategic management of the school's resources. Currently, they are too dependent up on the senior staff for shaping the direction of the school and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy and practice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The monitoring procedures have been a key factor in raising standards and ensuring school improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school applies the principles of best value in using its resources very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school; • Good progress is made at school; • Behaviour is good; • Teaching is good; • Well informed about progress; • The school is comfortable about questions and problems; • High expectations; • The school works closely with parents; • The school is well led and managed; • Helps pupils mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework; • Extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors confirm the positive views of the parents but found that the provision for homework and extra-curricular activities to be at least satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' attainment and personal development on starting school, at the age of four, is well below average for their age. Few have had any pre-school learning experiences. A very much higher than normal proportion of the pupils in the reception classes and throughout the school are on the school's SEN register. These pupils' needs have been accurately assessed by the school, and where appropriate, by specialist staff, such as educational psychologists. As a consequence, it is not surprising that, despite the effectiveness of the teaching they receive, their attainment by the time they reach the age of five is below average. Most five-year-olds in reception have poorly developed skills in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Reception pupils' knowledge and understanding of science and technology, history and geography, physical and creative development are below average.
2. Compared to national results, in the 1999 Key Stage 1 tests, attainment in writing and mathematics were in the lowest five per cent of all schools. In reading, results were well below the national average. During the years from 1996 to 1999, the school's results did not keep pace with rising national trends. The 1999 teacher assessments in science for pupils in Year 2 show that the number of pupils who attained Level 2 or above was very low in comparison to national figures and that the number of pupils attaining Level 3 and above was low in comparison to national averages. The results were slightly below those for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds at Level 2, and in line with similar schools at Level 3 and above.
3. Unconfirmed scores from the recent Year 2000 tests indicate a significant improvement in the attainment for reading, writing and mathematics but they remain below national expectations. The 1999 results compared to the achievement of similar schools, shows that attainment in reading was average, mathematics below average and writing was well below average. The Year 2000 results are likely to indicate a significant improvement when compared to similar schools' averages. The quality of work seen in lessons and pupils' books confirms the improvements indicated by these most recent test scores. Throughout Key Stage 1, the pupils are developing their competency in literacy and numeracy well; this is especially so for the higher attaining pupils. Writing remains the weakest skill and the school is actively addressing this issue by time tabling additional creative writing lessons.
4. The levels of attainment in Year 4, from the results of standardised tests and the work in pupils' books, are close to national averages in English and below average in mathematics and science. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in either key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their ability. Compared to their attainment on entry to the school, the pupils achieve very well, surpassing the targets that the school had set itself.
5. In English, inspection evidence shows that high attaining Year 2 pupils are able to read fluently and confidently from a range of texts and are above average in competence. The average attaining pupils are able to read with confidence from school reading books. The lower attaining pupils are able to read from their school reading books, but need some assistance with words they do not know. The quality of writing in Year 2 is below average overall, but children can form letters clearly and spell many words correctly. Even the lower attaining pupils are able to write clearly with capital letters and punctuation added to their work.

6. By the end of Year 4, pupils of high or average ability can read confidently and fluently from a range of texts. They write clearly with letters correctly formed. Much of their work is joined up and with few spelling errors. They are able to use punctuation such as speech marks. Pupils know how to search for information in reference books. Pupils with special educational needs reach standards appropriate to their abilities. No significant differences in standards in reading and writing were noted between boys and girls. Standards of work in speaking and listening are sound across the school. Even where pupils have a restricted vocabulary, they are able to express their ideas and feeling clearly, and participate in lessons fully.
7. In mathematics, pupils achieve well over time and in the lessons. The large number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as a direct result of high quality teaching and effective support from the learning support assistants. By the end of Year 2 pupils can use mental mathematics to order and calculate numbers to 30 and beyond, they can use number bonds to 15 and calculate if products cost more or less than other items. Pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of place value that is not always matched by their ability to record numbers. Pupils knowledge and understanding of shapes and measurements is unsatisfactory and their ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in different situations is below that expected for their age. Year 4 higher attaining pupils confidently calculate number bonds to 20 and accurately measure the angles of a triangle with a protractor. Other pupils find the concept of degrees and sections of a circle difficult to understand. Pupils' previous work indicates that they cover a broad and suitable range of study in mathematics.
8. In science, by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to use simple equipment with care. When pupils carry out investigations they recognise the principle of a 'fair test' and make sensible predictions about what may happen. Pupils in the reception class, for instance, were unable to identify a range of fairly common fruits or to suggest what the seeds were for. By the end of the key stage, pupils have developed a more satisfactory vocabulary. The majority of pupils are able to identify objects by using touch and smell and are able to carry out basic sorting processes using categories such as softness and hardness or shiny and rough surfaces. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a more extensive scientific vocabulary. In Year 4 pupils are able to distinguish between carnivores, herbivores and omnivores. Pupils are able to recognise that different factors produce different results in their investigations.
9. Attainment in the work seen in the other subjects of the curriculum is broadly in line with that expected for pupils in Key Stage 1 and for Years 3 and 4. The exception was physical education where attainment is less than expected in both key stages.
10. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement - which reflects the accomplishments of these pupils in relation to what might be expected of them - is high and sometimes very high. This is due to the good teaching that most pupils receive and the effectiveness of the support given to pupils in the school who have special educational needs. Pupils achieve well in virtually all subjects and particularly well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and religious education.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets identified for them. Although attainment is often below or well below that expected from pupils of a similar age, the majority of pupils achieve the targets set for their work. Many pupils achieve beyond the targets, due to good teaching and the effective contribution made by learning support assistants. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are among the many strengths of the school. Overall, pupils' attitudes, personal development and their relationships with each other and adults are very good. On balance their behaviour is good, despite many with special educational needs having behavioural difficulties. This represents a substantial improvement compared with the last inspection and it has had a significant effect on pupils' achievements and quality of learning.
13. Pupils enjoy school. They enter lessons eagerly. They are keen to get down to work and show enthusiasm, especially for answering questions. They concentrate well in most instances and are keen to show their work. These very positive attitudes are the result of the calm but firm application of the behaviour policy, the brisk and appropriate pace of almost all lessons and above all to the enthusiasm demonstrated by the teachers themselves. One example was the way in which pupils animatedly prepared for role play in a personal and social education lesson and then enthusiastically acted out their little plays, giving each other spontaneous applause.
14. Behaviour is good. It is very good on the playground and around the school, and also in most lessons. There is however, a minority of lessons where the pupils take too long to settle or the buzz of chatter interrupts the concentration of others. Teachers have satisfactory control of such lessons, but the time taken up with control lowers the pace of working and reduces the impact of the teaching. In two thirds of lessons behaviour is rated good or better. Pupils move calmly and cheerfully around the school. They are polite to staff and visitors and ask interesting questions about the inspection process. They keep the school tidy and in good condition. They look after their own and others property with care. They behave well at lunch-time and talk to each other sociably. They are considerate to each other. There is no evidence of any oppressive behaviour and staff had difficulty recalling any examples. Exclusions are only used as a last resort. There was a single example last year.
15. Relationships are very good. Teachers know pupils very well and speak well of them. Pupils get on well with each other, working amicably in pairs or threes. They are proud of the school and show it by indicating their displeasure when another behaves inappropriately in the presence of visitors.
16. Personal development is good, but limited by the lack of opportunity for independent study. There are opportunities for taking responsibility, such as the tidiness monitors at lunchtime or, as seen in a physical education lesson, when two games of rounders were started and pupils put in charge of each game.
17. Pupils with special educational needs show interest in their work. The majority are responsive to instructions in lessons and work at a steady pace. They have good relationships with each other and with teachers and learning support assistants. They behave well in assemblies, in the canteen and when walking around the school.
18. Attendance is satisfactory. It has increased from 90 to 93 per cent since the last inspection, almost all the improvement coming from unauthorised absence. It is still 1.2 per cent below the median for primary schools, but registers are closed very sharply and lateness appears to be a factor affecting this difference. Lessons start on time. Registers are efficiently maintained.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. During the inspection it was satisfactory or better in 100 per cent of lessons, and good or better in 60 per cent of lessons. In nine per cent of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. Given the socio-economic context of the locality and the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, this is a remarkably positive profile and one in which the staff and parents should be justifiably proud. The quality of teaching in the reception classes and in Key Stages 1 and 2 was equally good, although there was some variation in the quality between classes. Throughout the school, English, mathematics and science are taught well, and the quality of teaching in the other subjects seen was good. There was no significant variation in the quality of teaching in different year groups.
20. In reception and Key Stage 1 classes, good classroom organisation and management, coupled with the establishment of routines, ensure that pupils in these classes make a sound start to their education. Teaching in these classes is good. The children display a positive attitude to learning and respond enthusiastically and responsibly to the tasks they are given. Pupils arrive at school with few developed learning skills and teachers devote considerable time helping pupils to acquire these skills.
21. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in most subjects. However, some are less confident in information and communication technology, music and physical education. Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils and this is especially so for teaching literacy and numeracy. They employ a good range of teaching strategies to achieve lesson objectives and the activities that pupils undertake are challenging and stimulating.
22. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good. In the literacy and numeracy hours there is a balance of activities, including individual activity, group work, whole class exposition, and plenary sessions at the end of lessons to consolidate pupils' learning. The learning of literacy and numeracy is reinforced well during lessons in the other subjects of the curriculum, such as science, history and geography and design and technology. The school has satisfactorily developed the format of the literacy hour, with a suitable amount of time given to enable pupils to develop the skills required for extended writing. The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented very well and, as a result, all pupils are making good progress.
23. Collaborative planning by teachers in each year is good. It leads to the production of high quality lesson plans with specific learning objectives. Group work is matched well to the needs of pupils of differing ability, and activities set are interesting and challenging. Lesson objectives are generally communicated clearly to all pupils in an appropriate format. In Key Stage 2, some emphasis is placed on fostering independence in learning to enable pupils to work at their own pace and to make a sustained effort to complete tasks and to work effectively in groups. Overall, apart from the highest attaining pupils in Year 4, pupils have not sufficiently developed independent and enquiry based skills. Clear Programmes of Study have been drawn up for pupils with special educational needs. Work for these pupils is well matched to the specific needs of individuals and this helps them to make good progress in their learning.
24. In most classes teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively and maintain good discipline. They exercise authority clearly and fairly and set tasks that hold pupils' attention well and gain their interest and enthusiasm. During the introduction to a Year 2 mathematics lesson on the relative cost of various items, for example, the teacher made effective use of resources familiar to the pupils to gain their attention and focus their interest on the task. The school employs an adequate number of support staff and this helps to promote good discipline and behaviour. The school is aware of the need to

focus even more support on reception aged children. Support staff also help to ensure that the requirements of the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs are met well. Good teamwork between teachers and support staff ensures the effective deployment of the adults present in lessons. In most classes, support staff are used to maximum effect and they provide very good support for pupils who, as a consequence, participate fully in all lessons. Generally, time and resources are managed well. Sound use is made of information and communication technology equipment in the computer room, but in classrooms, computers often lack the necessary software to support pupils' learning across the curriculum.

25. The quality and use of ongoing assessment is good overall. Children under five years of age are accurately assessed on entry to the school to determine their level of development and the prior skills they have acquired. Very good use is made of the results to guide the planning of work for them. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is assessed against set learning objectives. The information obtained is used to set learning objectives for individual pupils and to assist in planning lessons. Good use is made of assessment data to set targets in individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs in classes.
26. The use of homework to support pupils' learning is satisfactory. Pupils take reading books home on a regular basis. Parental involvement in reading contributes to the standards pupils achieve. Homework supports literacy development and learning in some foundation subjects, notably history and geography.
27. The quality of pupils' learning is usually good as a direct consequence of the high quality teaching. Their acquisition of skills, knowledge, and understanding is good. From when they first enter the school, pupils begin to respond well to the opportunities given to them to play and form relationships during group activities. During lessons the intellectual, physical and creative effort that pupils make is good, and by the time they leave school, some can work well on their own and during collaborative activities. All but the higher attaining pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration and interest without close support from either the teacher or learning support assistant. Most listen attentively to each other and to their teachers, contribute appropriately to class discussions, and readily help one another. The majority of pupils complete the tasks set for them. Noise levels in some classes become too intrusive of the teaching and learning.
28. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons and when they are withdrawn for extra help. They are well integrated into their classes. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the targets set for pupils in their individual education plans are met. Appropriate tasks are given to match pupils' needs and this enables them to gain confidence in their work. Higher attaining pupils receive sufficient challenge. Effective help is provided by learning support assistants and this results in pupils making good progress in their learning.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are good. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met and the school complies with the requirement to have a daily act of collective worship. There is satisfactory coverage of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. At the time of the last inspection the provision for the reception-aged pupils was not meeting statutory requirements. This weakness has been rectified.
30. On the whole the curriculum has good breadth and balance and the school strives to ensure that all pupils have equal access to it. During the last inspection the school was not making sufficient provision for the higher attaining pupils. The quality of planning now ensures these pupils are set appropriate work for their ability. The overall time

allocation for lessons is satisfactory and is in line with the national average for a school of this type. The school meets recommendations for the teaching of literacy and numeracy and has very effective strategies in place. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to acquire computer skills in some areas of the curriculum. However, the school's computer suite is a very recent addition and teachers have not had time to adjust their plans to include its use. The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by the teaching of French in Year 4 and by having an environment week.

31. The school has a good programme of personal, social and health education that is well supported by visitors to the school. The provision is wide ranging and includes making pupils aware of the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. They learn about the dangers they can encounter both in the home and outside. Sex education is taught satisfactorily through the science curriculum. Assemblies are well used to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
32. The number and range of extra-curricular activities are good. There is a club for art and the school enables pupils to improve their skills in athletics and in team games such as football, rugby and netball by providing clubs outside lesson time. Pupils have the opportunity to compete against other schools.
33. There is good provision for special educational needs pupils and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. They have access to all the opportunities within the school. Pupils are withdrawn from lessons for additional support once a week during literacy hour to work on their individual targets. Language groups are used to provide further help with vocabulary.
34. The overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good and this is an improvement on the last inspection. Most pupils start school with very limited social and personal development. All the adults in school make considerable effort to provide pupils with opportunities to develop positive relationships and become responsible citizens. The pupils make enormous progress in this aspect of their development. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development. All pupils have a daily act of worship and assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their lives and on the lives of other people as well as an introduction to some moral issues. Opportunities for reflection are found in a number of subjects and lessons such as art, music, religious education, science, history and geography. However, planning for pupils' spiritual development is not strong across all subjects and not all areas of the curriculum make a significant contribution, thus reducing the impact of the good work being done by some.
35. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. A strong moral dimension is found in lessons where teachers constantly emphasise a very strong moral code of good behaviour and consideration for others which is consistently applied by all staff across all classes. The adults in the school present very positive role models. Pupils are taught to know right from wrong and the school is a happy and well ordered community.
36. There is very good provision for pupils' social development. In the majority of lessons opportunities are taken for developing social skills such as working together, taking turns and sharing. In class discussions, pupils are taught to listen carefully to others when they are speaking. Most pupils are confident speakers and respond well in discussions showing sensitivity to the views of others. There is a range of trips during the year that provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their social relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils are very courteous to visitors and are happy to talk with them. In general pupils do not enter the school with well-developed social skills and there is a very good element of 'value added' in their time in school.

37. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There is a cultural element in lessons such as history, English, art, music and religious education. A wide range of music from all parts of the world is used in assemblies and there are good displays of art in the school from a wide range of traditions. There is a residential visit each year for Year 4 pupils and this provides very good social, personal and cultural development. In general pupils have good opportunities to study their own culture and heritage. Opportunities to study the diversity of other cultures are rather more limited. The school acknowledges this and is actively promoting further development.
38. The school's links with the community were already on the increase at the time of the last inspection. Since then the pace has accelerated and the steps taken to see that young people in the neighbourhood have space to follow their interests and that the community is provided with a more pleasant environment have resulted in the repositioning of the school as the hub of the locality rather than an appendage. Consequently vandalism and other difficulties have decreased and West Minster is seen as a model that others might follow. The beneficial effect of all this is that parents are much more favourably disposed towards the school and participate more in their children's education. Examples of community projects are the Oasis project; a house being utilised by three schools to develop citizenship, the Youth Action Group, which helps with planning improvements as well as improvement tasks, the riverside walk, and the play area beside the canal bank. All these were the result of strong local collaboration, with the school often taking the lead.
39. There is a strong partnership with partner institutions, all schools on the Isle of Sheppey participating in the Island Federation. Subject co-ordinators meet regularly and know precisely when and where each item will be taught in their subjects, thus avoiding repetition. The headteachers also meet regularly.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school cares very well for its pupils, an improvement in several respects compared to judgements made at the last inspection. The greatest improvements are the assessment procedures, followed by the support for pupils' personal development. Procedures for monitoring and improving both behaviour and attendance have improved substantially. This has had a significant impact on raising pupils' attainment and improving their quality of learning.
41. The school is a safe and secure environment with good supervision at break times and at the start and end of the school day. The allocation of midday supervisors to classes, which they follow for the whole of their school life, is highly beneficial both in terms of behaviour management and safety. All the expected safety measures are in place and regular safety checks and audits are made. Results are recorded and progressed. Child protection procedures are very good, the nominated person being much experienced in this area and highly committed to taking the utmost care of pupils. Appropriate training has been given to staff. Welfare provision is also very good, with strict control of medication and the provision of a breakfast club, currently only operating on Tuesdays, but due to become daily next term. Aspects of the personal and social education programme help pupils to look after themselves; for example, one lesson dealt with the way to refuse an offer of a risky substance, such as a cigarette, and ended with an assertive chorus of "No!" These also make pupils aware of the right approach to the prevention of harassment, which is a community concern and, passing by on the other side, is not an option.

42. Attendance is extremely well monitored and promoted. The school develops good strategies with the education welfare officer, both on attendance and welfare matters, and takes a very positive stance on holidays in term time and lateness, at times rewarding lateness with loss of playtime, a highly unpopular action with latecomers.
43. Rewards are an extremely effective tool for the school. They reward good attendance, good behaviour and good work, and certificates are awarded at the Monday assemblies, to which parents are invited.
44. Good behaviour is also very effectively monitored and promoted. The three platforms on which good behaviour is built are respect for one another and everything in the school, clear and unambiguous rules that are easy to understand, and the continuous monitoring and improvement of classroom practices. Staff are very good role models and they treat pupils in the way they like to be treated themselves.
45. Pupils are well known by their teachers. They talk knowledgeably about them and give very good support and advice about personal development. Their knowledge is informal, there being little recorded information about personal development and nothing is recorded about concentration or persistence, similar factors.
46. The provision indicated in Statements of Special Educational Needs is fully implemented. Detailed individual education plans are written by class teachers together with learning support assistants and are very effectively monitored. A thorough review system enables pupils' progress to be judged and further targets for improvement to be identified. Pupils are aware of the targets set for them and this enables them to chart their own progress towards their learning goals. All special educational needs pupils are valued as members of the school community. There is very good communication with outside agencies to assist pupils with special educational needs.
47. There are very good procedures in place for the assessment of pupils' attainment. Pupils are tested on entry to the school. Effective use is then made of formal and standardised testing in reading and mathematics and teachers keep on going records show pupils' progress. In other subjects that teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding at the end of each topic of study and these are matched to National Curriculum levels. Standardised tests are administered annually in English and mathematics and the scores allow teachers to assess and track individual pupils' progress from year to year. In most subjects a collection of assessed work is kept as a portfolio. Good use is made of assessment information to inform the planning of the curriculum. It is also well used to set targets for pupils' attainment and to inform their next schools of the levels they have reached. Work is regularly marked and teachers are consistent in using their marking to support and encourage pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. Parents are now involved more in the work of the school than they were at the last inspection and the school is providing better information. Parents believe that the school provides a good education as a result of good teaching, good management and high expectations. This results in good progress. They believe the school helps their children to become more mature and responsible. They find the school approachable. They are less happy about homework and the range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team supports the favourable comments but finds that neither homework nor extra-curricular activities are a cause for concern.

49. Parents help the school in a variety of ways. The lively Parent Teacher Association runs a number of events and raises very useful funds for the school. Parents and volunteers run the breakfast club and a number help in class. They attend assemblies on Mondays and support other events.
50. The information provided for parents is good. The prospectus and annual report are very good and there is good attendance at Parents' evenings, where pupils' progress is discussed, but the quality of written reports is variable, even though these have recently been revised to include targets.
51. Often whilst the remarks are clear indications of what pupils have attained, elsewhere the comments are too vague. The same is true of the targets; for example, how is a pupil expected to react to 'improve listening skills'? In contrast, 'practice the multiplication of two and three digit numbers' is clearly an approachable target. Little advice is given about how targets can be tackled at home.
52. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at school and at home is good, but there is scope for improvement in the number of parents who actively encourage and help children with their school work. Record books pass daily between school and home and there is ample opportunity for parents to seek help or clarification about school work. The school is very keen for parents to be more closely involved. The present collaboration is having a beneficial effect on pupils' attainment but more could be achieved.
53. There are good induction procedures for children when they first join the school and transfer to the middle school is also handled well. All children are enrolled into the local library whilst in the reception class, thus encouraging parents to continue its use.
54. Liaison arrangements for parents who have children with special educational needs is good. Parents are aware of the targets set for their child and sign the individual education plan. They are given regular and detailed information about their child's progress. A good relationship has been established between parents and the special educational needs co-ordinator.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The headteacher, very well supported by other key staff, provides outstanding leadership for the school. The headteacher is dynamic and committed to the development of the school and raising the attainment of the pupils. He gives a clear direction and focuses the attention of the staff and governors on the implementation of procedures that aim to improve the school's educational provision and raise standards. Through a rigorous process of review and monitoring, the senior staff and governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has provided the framework for writing the school development plan, the priorities of which provide a strong basis for educational development in the next few years. The school has, for example, secured funding to provide a pre-school learning centre to improve the educational provision for children in the locality. The structure of the development plan reflects the changes recommended in the last inspection report but is insufficiently tied into the school's financial planning cycle.
56. The headteacher has also introduced procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and curriculum provision. These procedures are excellent and they are being implemented effectively by the assistant headteacher and subject leaders. The monitoring procedures have been a central feature in raising standards. The resulting analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses is being used to modify the existing development plan and to plan for the next phase of school improvement.

57. Most staff have been delegated some degree of responsibility for different aspects of the school's work. The assistant headteacher, the co-ordinator for special educational needs, the teachers with subject leadership responsibility and the site manager carry out their duties conscientiously and extremely effectively. Together they have developed a shared culture of success to which staff and governors are fully committed. However, the school is aware that a great deal of responsibility has been devolved to too few staff.
58. Effective management of special educational needs provision is provided by the co-ordinator. He works closely with teachers and learning support staff and holds regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress. As a result of this detailed monitoring of individual pupils' success, some pupils are able to have their names removed from the register of special educational needs. There is a governor for special educational needs who attends in-school review meetings. He makes a valued contribution to the provision for these pupils.
59. Overall, the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is satisfactory. Governors collaborate with the headteacher in planning the strategic management of the school's resources. Currently, the governors are too dependent upon the senior staff for shaping the direction of the school and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy and practice. The school applies the principles of best value in using its resources very well. It has used these principles, for example, when deciding on the services it will purchase from the local authority and those it will place with outside contractors.
60. The school has suffered from a reduction in its annual budget as pupil numbers have declined in recent years. However, the forecast of numbers for the next few years is far more positive. Despite the decline in budget the school has not made any staff redundant or set a deficit budget. Through very good financial control and prudent budget management the school still achieved a surplus by the end of the last financial year. Resources are used extremely effectively.
61. Governors are fully committed to school improvement and many attend training courses to help them to understand the educational standards achieved, which they are increasingly concerned to do. A few governors frequently meet with key staff, such as those with responsibility for special educational needs, in order to inform themselves about the work of the school. Currently two of the key governing body management posts, (chair of finance and chair of the curriculum committees), are held by the assistant headteacher. The school is aware that this does not give the governing body a sufficiently independent view of the work in the school. The governors have set targets for improvement in the performance of the headteacher and the assistant headteacher. The senior staff have also set targets for improvement in the standards that pupils attain. As more meaningful and reliable information on pupils' attainment on entry to school is collected, this will inform and improve the school's procedures for the target setting process. The school successfully achieves the aspirations articulated in its statement of aims.
62. The school provides very good support and guidance to new members of staff and temporary teachers. There are satisfactory opportunities for staff to participate in professional development activities but these are not sufficiently incorporated into the development planning process. Commendably, the school's appraisal programme has been maintained and staff have benefited from annual professional development interviews with the headteacher. The school is in a good position to comply with performance management initiatives from next year.

63. Overall, there is a good match between the provision of teachers and educational support staff on the one hand, and the demands of the curriculum on the other. In many instances, teachers with subject expertise are effectively deployed to provide leadership for the development of the curriculum. One weakness does exist as currently there is not a competent musician on the staff to promote curriculum development. There is a high level of educational support staff provision and this factor, together with the effective arrangements for the management of special educational needs in the school, has a very positive impact on the standards achieved. However, at times there is insufficient learning support in the reception class.
64. The overall lack of expertise in information and communication technology amongst staff is an issue the school has partly addressed through constructing a computer suite. Currently classes are to be time tabled for regular information and communication technology lessons. The school has made very effective use of the Standards Fund grant, grants from a variety of sources and its own financial reserves to provide the computer room, which houses a suite of up to date computers and ancillary equipment. The school has been successful in gaining grants to establish an early learning centre on the school site and is waiting to finalise the arrangements. Specific funds for special educational needs are used appropriately. Overall resources are used well in lessons. The school has sufficient learning resources to meet its curricular needs. The school is developing its use of new computer technology to enhance the administration and organisation of the school.
65. The school has good accommodation that is used well to deliver the curriculum. The quality of displays in classrooms and throughout the school is high and supports pupils' learning. The accommodation is very well maintained and cleaned exceptionally well through the highly effective management of the site manager.
66. Since the last inspection the school has achieved several significant improvements. These include improving: the levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy; the quality of teaching; the effectiveness of management; the review and monitoring procedures; attendance; links with parents and the local community and the provision of an information and communication technology suite. Progress has been excellent.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to improve the standards of education provided, the governors, headteacher and staff, as appropriate, should:

1 Strengthen the role and composition of the governing body by:

- taking a more pro-active role in determining the educational direction of the school;
- undertaking independent reviews of the school's work;
- appointing key committee members who are not senior school staff.
(paragraphs 59, 61)

2 Work with the LEA and other agencies to provide a pre-school educational provision to:

- ensure that an adequate outdoor play area is provided for children under five;
- ensure more curriculum links are established between the pre-school provision and the reception classes.
(paragraphs 55, 75)

3 Develop the use of ICT to support subjects in the curriculum by:

- strengthening the role of the ICT co-ordinator;
- providing more training support for all staff;
- developing the time-tabled use of the computer room;
- ensuring all subject schemes of work sufficiently incorporate ICT skills.
(paragraphs 30, 64, 122, 125)

4 Provide additional support for reception age pupils by:

- deploying additional class learning support for literacy and numeracy sessions;
- establishing more parental and other voluntary help in the reception classes.
(paragraphs 63, 75)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Governors may also wish to consider including the following less important issues in their action plan.

Linking the school development plan more closely with the financial year and staff development. (paragraph 55)

delegating responsibility to more of the staff when appropriate. (paragraph 57)

providing more opportunity for independent study, especially for pupils in Key Stage 2. (paragraph 16)

the appointment of a member of staff with a music specialism. (paragraphs 63, 129)

include the planning of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the subject schemes of work. (paragraph 34)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	85
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	8	51	40	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	Y R – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	248
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	84

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	144

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	35	27	62

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	12	22
	Girls	18	12	16
	Total	34	24	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	55 (39)	39 (30)	61(70)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	21	26
	Girls	20	18	18
	Total	37	39	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (44)	63 (48)	71 (40)
	National	82(81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	208
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	1	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 – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.8
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	203

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
	£
Total income	532,667
Total expenditure	515,707
Expenditure per pupil	1,842
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,007
Balance carried forward to next year	25,967

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	248
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	36	0	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	27	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	33	4	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	36	11	2	2
The teaching is good.	64	35	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	27	7	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	22	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	38	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	33	9	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	27	9	2	9

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

68. The educational provision for children under five is good. In this school year there has been a different arrangement for children entering school, due to the number of the intake. Children have entered school either in September or January, depending on the date of their fifth birthday. Children attend school on a part-time basis for the first two weeks. There are good procedures for assessing children when they first begin school and these are carried out in co-operation with parents. Assessment results show that children's attainment on entry to the school is low, when compared to national figures. During the inspection there were seven children who were under five. The majority of children make good progress. However, due to low attainment on entry, most children do not achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five. Children enter Key Stage 1 with some areas of weakness. These are mostly evident in language and literacy, in mathematics and their understanding of the world, where attainment is below that expected from children of a similar age. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in children's language, literacy and mathematical skills, but they still remain unsatisfactory. Children with special educational needs and higher attaining children make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Personal and social development.

69. Many children who enter school have had no play or nursery school experience and, therefore, their personal and social skills are underdeveloped. However, they make good progress in working together, in sharing and taking turns and quickly become settled into the routine of the classroom. This was evident when children were pretending to serve food in the class cafe. They co-operated well and enjoyed the experience together. Children grow in confidence when communicating with the teacher and each other. They are generally responsive and well behaved. Good attention is given to developing children's personal and social skills by teachers and learning support assistants and this has a positive impact on children's progress.

Language and literacy.

70. The provision for developing children's language and literacy skills is good. Many pupils are not confident in speaking and listening, or reading and writing when they enter school and show very limited skills. By age five many do not achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Although many children recognise and can write their own name, they often lack confidence in writing simple words unaided and confuse different letter shapes. The majority of children enjoy looking at books and reading short words, but reading skills are underdeveloped and result in children knowing a limited amount of vocabulary. There are children, however, who become more confident as readers and talk enthusiastically about the stories they enjoy. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but very occasionally children are allowed to call out during class listening time and this disturbs the concentration of others. Effective use is made of nursery rhymes and jingles to increase children's language skills. There are very good procedures for marking children's work. This enables teachers to judge children's progress and to ensure that appropriate tasks are set. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to developing children's language and literacy skills.

Mathematics.

71. Although children are making satisfactory progress in their mathematical development, their achievement does not meet the nationally expected outcomes. Most children count confidently to ten, but their knowledge of numbers above ten is less secure. When they first enter school, most children have a very limited understanding of mathematical vocabulary. However, as they make progress they are able to refer more accurately to different sizes and shapes. They become familiar with terms such as circle, square and triangle and use next to, in, and behind, when discussing their work. They weigh small objects and predict whether they are heavier or lighter than each other. Good links are made with other subjects of the curriculum in order to develop children's numeracy skills; for example, in a physical education lesson, good teaching resulted in children becoming aware of the use of number in every day situations. They were asked to count the number of children standing on a mat and to add or subtract to make different numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

72. Children make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They looked at different fruits and made comparisons between them. They saw the fruit seeds and looked at their shape and size. However, many children showed a limited understanding of why seeds are planted in the soil. Children visited Sheerness library, changed their books and listened to a story. On the way back they walked by the canal and fed the ducks. They tried unsuccessfully to feed the seagulls and quickly realised that it was impossible to do this when the birds were flying. Children gain an understanding of the way that the computer can be used in their work. They can type in their name, use the mouse and some children can print out their work.

Creative and aesthetic development.

73. Children use their imaginations well in role play and in pretending to be different characters; for example, in a religious education lesson, children used different movements and gestures to show how Zaccheaus was called down from the tree by Jesus. Children enjoy singing and join in well with nursery rhymes and jingles. They have a good memory for words. Children use colour well in their pictures and collages and classroom displays celebrate their achievement.

Physical development.

74. Children gain confidence in using their bodies to move in different ways. In a physical education lesson, children found ways of jumping, marching and creeping like a cat. Good attention to children's safety by the teacher enabled children to feel secure and confident in their work. During the lesson, children developed their hand eye co-ordination by practising catching skills.
75. The early years co-ordinator provides good leadership. Detailed records and observations are made and these ensure that appropriately challenging tasks are provided for each pupil. Learning support assistants make a worthwhile contribution to children's progress. However, additional support is required in the mornings during the literacy and numeracy hours to support group work. The school has plans to develop the outside play area to further enhance the provision.
76. The school has been successful in addressing the weakness in provision highlighted in the previous inspection report. All five-year-olds receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.

ENGLISH

77. When children come to the school they have well below average attainment. The 1999 National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments indicate that by the end of Key Stage 1, standards in English are well below average. Attainment in reading is well below the national average and standards in writing are very low compared to the national average. Test results from 1996 - 1999 indicate that the school's standards are declining, in comparison to rising national standards. The performance of pupils compared to similar schools is average for reading and well below average for writing. However, more recent test results taken in the Year 2000, together with inspection evidence, indicate that standards of attainment have improved significantly. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are below average in English, and by the end of Year 4, they are close to average, indicating good progress in learning at both key stages. By the end of Year 4, high attaining pupils are close to or above average at both reading and writing, average attaining pupils are close to or slightly below average, and low attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well below average.
78. Inspection evidence shows that high attaining Year 2 pupils are able to read fluently and confidently from a range of texts and are above average in competence. The average attaining pupils are able to read with confidence from school reading books. They can re-tell a story they have read, and can build up words they do not know. The lower attaining pupils are able to read from their school reading books but need some assistance with words they do not know. The quality of writing in Year 2 is below average overall but children can form letters clearly and spell many words correctly. Even the lower attaining pupils are able to write clearly with capital letters and punctuation added to their work.
79. By the end of Year 4, pupils of high or average ability can read confidently and fluently from a range of texts. They write clearly with letters correctly formed, much of their work is joined up and with few spelling errors. They are able to use punctuation such as speech marks. Pupils know how to search for information in reference books. Pupils with special educational needs reach standards appropriate for their abilities. No significant differences in standards in reading and writing were noted between boys and girls.
80. Standards of work in speaking and listening are good across the school. Even where pupils have a restricted vocabulary, they are able to express their ideas and feelings clearly, and participate in lessons fully. Teachers give their pupils many opportunities to speak in front of the whole class and to discuss issues with each other, contributing effectively to their self-confidence and esteem. Likewise, pupils listen to their teachers carefully when required to do so, and to each other. Speaking and listening were identified as strengths right across the school. The pupils' willingness to talk to and explain their work to the inspection team was impressive. The quality of reading at Year 4 is such that pupils are able to use their reading skills to good effect both in English and other subjects to enhance their learning.
81. The quality of teaching in English across the school is good. It was noted that the National Literacy Strategy is firmly in place and teachers are confident about its delivery. This has had a significant effect on improving standards. In Key Stage 1, the teaching in the majority of lessons observed was good with some being very good. Teachers plan lessons well and use good management strategies to keep pupils interested in their work. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to keep pupils on task. Where teaching is only satisfactory, this frequently is a result of teachers being distracted by managing pupils with challenging behaviour. Homework is used effectively, particularly to extend reading, and one effective innovation of pupils choosing to take home a 'writing briefcase' was noted.

82. At Key Stage 2, the large majority of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers' planning was good and they used suitable management strategies to help keep the pupils on task. They question their pupils effectively, and provide opportunities for them to speak to the whole class. Lessons are well planned and organised. The teachers know their pupils well, assess their progress effectively, and set them manageable targets to achieve. The result of this is that pupils take pride in their work and achieve well. By the end of Year 4, the higher attaining pupils are confident and independent readers, and writing standards are good, with letters being joined, clear writing, neatly set out, and well spelt. The pupils of average attainment can also read confidently and write well. Literacy is used effectively right across the curriculum. Good examples were seen in history and geography where extended pieces of writing had been undertaken in different contexts.
83. The high quality of teaching is reflected in the quality of learning. This is good at both key stages. Because of this, pupils make good progress during lessons and across time. In some cases, pupils whose writing was virtually illegible at the start of the year, had well formed, joined up writing by the end of the year. Some special needs pupils make good progress in their lessons but less good progress across time.
84. The school has achieved a great deal of improvement since the last inspection. The school expects to be able to continue the very good improvements made. In some cases, pupils in Year 4 are able to read well in advance of national expectations. Speaking and listening is good in all cases, even where pupils are lacking in their range of vocabulary. They can express themselves well, and this area is used effectively right across the curriculum. The school has targeted the quality of writing, and this has improved considerably. By the end of Year 4, many pupils are writing using a joined up style, their writing is clear and legible, with a majority of correct spellings. However, some inconsistencies were observed. The quality of writing by an individual pupil occasionally deteriorates for no apparent reason.
85. The subject is effectively managed, with support being given where necessary and appropriate resources being provided. There is a policy for English that is due to be updated early next term. Staff have had training to help improve literacy and this has been effective. Teaching is monitored, and teachers are given feedback to help them improve. This initiative has had a positive impact across the school. The school is well resourced, with books and other teaching materials. Computers are sometimes used to assist with the teaching of literacy, but opportunities to use the school's information technology facilities were missed by some of the teachers.
86. Although there are a range of non-fiction texts in the school library, the range is limited. A broader range of non-fiction texts would help both pupils who were capable readers to develop their skills further, and provide extra interest for those pupils who have more limited reading skills. Some use of information and communication technology as a part of literacy lessons was observed, but this was restricted to a minority of classes. There was no specific use of information and communication technology to help pupils with special needs overcome difficulties with literacy. The school has identified the teaching of grammar and development of vocabulary as being areas for further development.

MATHEMATICS

87. Results of the national tests in mathematics in 1999 at Key Stage 1 show attainment to be very low compared with the national average. In comparison with similar schools, results appear to be below average. However, this comparison is made on the basis of pupil eligibility for free school meals and does not take account of the number of pupils with special educational needs. West Minster School has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and inspection evidence indicates that pupil achievement is above that expected for these pupils. Teacher assessments were similar to inspection findings and indicate that the areas for development are the use and application of mathematics, and shape, space and measure. Trends from 1996 - 1999 show that attainment has not kept pace with rising national results. The standards achieved by both boys and girls in the 1999 tests were not significantly different. The number of pupils achieving the higher levels was also well below the national average. More recent tests taken in the Year 2000, together with inspection evidence, indicate that standards of attainment have improved significantly. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are below average in mathematics, and by the end of Year 4, they are close to average, indicating good progress in learning at both key stages. By the end of Year 4, high attaining pupils are close to the national average, average attaining pupils are below this standard, and low attaining pupils' including those with special educational needs, are well below average. The unconfirmed Key Stage 1 and optional Year 3 and 4 results are likely to be in line with averages for similar schools. Evidence gained through the inspection reflects this improving picture and shows attainment overall to be below national expectations.
88. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the quality of teaching in mathematics through good application of the numeracy scheme and frequent monitoring of teaching and learning. The school provides its pupils with a good grounding in numeracy and helps them to use their skills in other subjects. Improvement has been good following the appointment of the current headteacher.
89. Overall, pupils achieve well over time and in the lessons seen. The higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress and this feature is an improvement since the last inspection. The large number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as a direct result of high quality teaching and effective support from the classroom assistants. In one lesson, younger pupils developed their skills in number and use of mathematical vocabulary by practical work and playing number games. The most able understand the concept of 'left and right', 'above and below' 'bottom and top' and could double numbers up to ten. Some pupils in a Year 2 lesson use mental mathematics to order and calculate numbers to 30 and beyond, use number bonds to 15 and calculate if products cost more or less than other items. The lessons build well on what had been taught previously. Pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of place value that is not always matched to their ability to record numbers. In Year 4 lessons, higher attaining pupils confidently calculate number bonds to 20 and accurately measure the angles of a triangle with a protractor. Other pupils find the concept of degrees and sections of a circle difficult to understand. Pupils' previous work indicates that they cover a broad and suitable range of study in mathematics. There is a concentration on number work as advised by the National Numeracy Strategy.
90. Initially, lower attaining pupils make slow progress in understanding new concepts, but once they have grasped the principle they make good progress with adult support. Higher attaining pupils quickly apply new learning and move rapidly to more challenging tasks. Their mental agility advances with the practise of daily mental arithmetic, especially when question sessions are stimulating. Pupils make good progress when they use mathematics in other subjects; for example, by constructing graphs from data in science and geography. They extend their literacy by regularly

adding to their subject vocabulary. They use their knowledge and understanding of number in everyday contexts, such as time and monetary transactions. They demonstrate their knowledge by adding coins of different value and they use the other three mathematical operations in similarly practical ways.

91. Pupils behave well and show an interest in mathematics, especially when questioning is lively and tasks relate to their experience. They revel in appropriately set challenges, which they answer with enthusiasm, and they respond positively to variety in lessons. Pupils' interest wanes when the teacher talks for too long and the pace slows. Pupils of all ages work well in pairs and in groups, but only a few of the higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 can work independently for a sustained period.
92. The majority of teaching is good or better. There was a greater proportion of very effective teaching observed in Key Stage 2. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Where teaching is good or better, teachers spend appropriate amounts of time on quick-fire questioning that maintains pupils' mental alertness. This practice gives teachers a continuous awareness of pupils' progress that they use to shape the direction of the lesson and of future work. Good planning and high expectations are strong features of most lessons and this contributes positively to progress. Better teaching includes a range of tasks carefully chosen to provide learning opportunities for the wide ability range present in most classes, and for the high number of pupils with special educational needs. In such lessons teachers draw upon practical resources to give tasks more relevance and carefully design their questioning to challenge the higher and lower attaining pupils. Teachers use support teachers and assistants effectively to promote the achievement of lower attaining pupils and of those with special educational needs. Teachers manage pupils well by giving clear directions calmly and usually with good humour. The less satisfactory aspects of teaching occurred when pupils were not given sufficient guidance on how much work to complete or when the noise level adversely effected progress. Homework is given regularly in most classes to enhance pupils' learning.
93. The school provides good coverage of all aspects of mathematics. The headteacher is currently the co-ordinator and he reviews colleagues' planning on a weekly basis. He is aware of the need to delegate the responsibility for co-ordinating the subject. Mathematics teaching is monitored by the assistant headteacher and this has supported the development of the subject. The school stresses the importance of assessment in creating well-targeted plans for learning. The school is aware that the use and application of information and communication technology needs developing. Number work is particularly well developed. The school has adopted the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy and this has supported the development of the provision for mathematics and has prepared teachers and learning support assistants well. The school is aware of the positive impact the National Numeracy Strategy is having on teaching and has invested in appropriate resources. The school analyses test and assessment data to identify areas for further development.

SCIENCE

94. Attainment in science is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4 when pupils leave the school. Teacher assessments in 1999 for pupils in Year 2 show that the number of pupils who attained Level 2 or above was very low in comparison to national figures and that the number of pupils attaining Level 3 and above was low in comparison to national averages. The results were slightly below those for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds at Level 2, and in line with similar schools at Level 3 and above. There are no significant differences in the attainment between boys and girls. Pupils achieve equally well in the four aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards in relation to their prior attainment. Both inspection evidence and the teacher

assessments for the Year 2000 that have been completed, show that attainment is rising. The two main factors in this rise have been improvements in teaching and the very successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, which is helping to overcome pupils' low attainment on entry.

95. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to use simple equipment with care. The majority of pupils are confident when speaking and respond well to suggestions about how to find things out. Pupils in Year 2, for instance, are able to discuss the results of an investigation into what conditions are necessary for plants to grow. When pupils carry out investigations they recognise the principle of a 'fair test' and make sensible predictions about what may happen. Results are then usually written up on pre-prepared worksheets. Few pupils enter the school with a wide scientific knowledge. Pupils in the reception class, for instance, were unable to identify a range of fairly common fruits or to suggest what the seeds were for. By the end of the key stage pupils have developed a more satisfactory vocabulary; for example, they can identify parts of the human body and various parts of plants. The majority of pupils are able to identify objects by using touch and smell and are able to carry out basic sorting processes using categories such as softness and hardness or shiny and rough surfaces.
96. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a more extensive scientific vocabulary. Pupils in Year 3, for example, can confidently discuss the differences between transparent, translucent and opaque surfaces and pupils in Year 4 are able to distinguish between carnivores, herbivores and omnivores. Pupils are able to recognise that different factors produce different results in their investigations. This is clearly demonstrated by Year 4 classes who are able to describe the differences which might occur if different batteries and a varying number of light bulbs are used when constructing basic circuits. These lessons also produce a good deal of delight from the pupils when circuits work and bulbs light up!
97. The quality of teaching is good across both key stages and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. At the time of the previous inspection teaching was judged to be 'satisfactory with some unsatisfactory elements'. It is this improvement in teaching that is one of the key factors in the rise in pupils' attainment that is now being found. All the teachers have very good class control. This is achieved with good humour and without fuss. Pupils' behaviour is very good and there are very good relationships between pupils and with their teachers. This leads to a relaxed but businesslike working atmosphere where pupils enjoy science and feel confident in taking part in discussions and experiments. Teachers' planning, over the long and short term, is good and this produces a consistent and progressive course with suitably challenging work for the pupils. All the teachers have good subject knowledge. Occasionally higher attaining pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their writing skills when recording the results of tests and investigations. Classroom organisation is good and equipment is put out and cleared away with no wastage of time. Pupils are efficient and careful when handling equipment. There is a high level of teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants that provides good additional support for all pupils but especially for those with special educational needs. The provision for homework is satisfactory.
98. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to study, and to reflect upon, the world and their environment and this makes a contribution to their spiritual development. There is a strong moral dimension in all lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong. In discussions, pupils learn to listen and to appreciate the views of others. Their social development is further enhanced by good opportunities to work together, share and take turns. Overall the subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' basic skills. They are given opportunities to develop their writing in most lessons

and they learn a range of scientific vocabulary which they enjoy using. A number of their investigations are recorded using a variety of graphs and tables and this contributes to their numeracy development. However, the use of information and communication technology to enrich and enhance the curriculum is inconsistent.

99. There are very good procedures in place for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. Very good use is made of the data provided to monitor differences between classes and between boys and girls as well as trends over time. The previous report identified weaknesses in teaching experimental and investigative science and assessment has been used to rectify this weakness. The scheme of work and subject handbook provide a progressive programme for pupils' work and the accommodation provides spacious and well maintained areas in which to work. The subject has good resources. Overall the leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a systematic and rigorous programme for monitoring and supporting of teaching that is a significant contributory factor in improving teaching and in raising attainment. The curriculum co-ordinator has not been in post for a sufficient time yet to make an individual impact. The management has clear, realistic priorities and ambitious but sensible aims for raising standards.
100. Taking into account the rise in standards, the improvement in teaching, pupils' very good attitudes to work and the strong management, the subject has made very good progress since the previous report.

ART

101. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4, standards are similar to those expected from pupils of the same age. During the inspection only two lessons were seen, but scrutiny of work, teachers' planning and displays around the school confirms this judgement. In both key stages pupils are given a range of experiences which enable them to develop satisfactory skills in using different media. Pupils' activities include painting, making collages, drawing, using clay and modelling with different materials. Pupils in the reception class use salt dough to make food for their class cafe. They show skill in using simple tools to make a cake and to decorate it with candles. They make an attractive collage of a Chinese water dragon. Pupils in Year 2 use their imaginations well when making different patterns to decorate a tile. They visited Holy Trinity church, Sheerness and observed the way patterns were used. They made their own sketches of patterns in the stained glass windows, the pews, the candles, the font and the roof beams. Year 4 pupils look at the work of famous Impressionist painters. They successfully capture the same style and use of colour in their own work. Pupils copy designs used by the Aztecs and the Incas and show a good awareness for detail. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make good progress in their work.
102. Pupils in both key stages have good attitudes towards the subject. They concentrate on tasks and are eager to talk about their work. They handle the resources carefully.
103. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. Lessons are well planned to ensure that pupils' skills are developed; for example, in a Year 3 lesson, effective planning resulted in pupils making good progress in close observational drawing. The teacher improved pupils' skills by suggesting different ways of using space and tone and by ensuring that the resources available were appropriate for the task. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work and this has a positive impact on their learning. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology. This was used by pupils to find out about the artist, Picasso.
104. There is good leadership by the co-ordinator. A range of very good resources supports pupils' work. The art club is a valuable means of further encouraging pupils to develop

their skills. Effective use is made of displays, both in classrooms and around the school and these celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils work has been displayed in Sheerness library.

105. The school has been successful in addressing the weaknesses highlighted in the previous inspection report.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. Timetable restrictions limited the number of lessons that could be observed, but a scrutiny of work, displays and class portfolios enabled judgements to be made. When children come in to the school they are well below average in attainment. However, standards in design and technology were good in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils were able to make working windmills and they had designed and made finger puppets and then drawn their design and labelled the components. In one class, they were observed making tiles. They had visited two buildings, looked at the designs of tiles used in construction, and were then learning how to manipulate clay in order to make their own tiles. Food technology is a valuable part of the curriculum, with Year 1 classes having investigated a range of fruits before creating a fruit salad.

107. By Year 4, pupils were able to make working models using electrical circuits. In one class, they had made working model lighthouses, were then moving on to making working torches and were set the challenge of making their own switches. In another example, they had made books, had looked at different ways of fixing the spine, and had selected their preferred technique. In all cases where drawings had been used, these had been done with care and pride. Labels had been added to diagrams where pupils had sufficient writing skills to do so. Year 3 pupils had created food packaging by designing and making boxes for different kinds of sweets. They had also made sandwiches, selecting from a range of fillings and looking at their relative food values.

108. Teachers know their subject well and prepare interesting and suitable lessons at both key stages. They organise their lessons effectively and have all the necessary materials to hand. They deploy the learning support assistants to good effect and maintain pupils' interest in their work. The quality of learning reflects the high quality of teaching. Pupils maintain concentration and interest in their activities. They use materials and tools sensibly. Issues of health and safety are emphasised, particularly when the children are working with tools. There was limited evidence of work with information and communication technology in the subject. The pupils had previously designed Christmas cards using a computer, but opportunities to use desktop publishing or design packages were limited.

109. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, with a greater range of topics being covered and the investigation of products being included. This has led to a consequent improvement in pupils' learning and higher standards of work. Good quality of drawing was seen in pupils' notebooks and a clear development in their drawing skills was evident over time. The school has purchased a set of design and technology resource trolleys to be shared between each year group, including an appropriate range of good quality tools and materials.

110. The assistant headteacher currently co-ordinates the subject and manages it effectively. There is a subject policy in place with a scheme of work for teachers to follow. Much of the design technology teaching takes place in the context of other subject work; for example, the construction of lighthouses took place as a part of a science topic.

GEOGRAPHY

111. By the age of seven, pupils reach the expected levels of attainment in geography.. They recognise natural and man-made features on a map and most can identify grid squares using letters and numbers. They apply what they have learnt about grid squares in mathematics to the lines on an atlas map. Many successfully use the index in the atlas to find countries and places. Most pupils can name and use the points of the compass and can give directions. On a large scale map of the local area they plot their route from home to school. Work on land use shows good understanding of the different functions of buildings. Pupils have a sound appreciation of the water cycle and they learn that bar charts can be used to show differences.
112. By the age of nine, pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge and skills in geography. Most are able to interpret maps of different scales and can estimate distances. They have good appreciation of map symbols and are competent at using a key. They can collect data using tally charts and are then able to present it in the form of bar charts. These are often produced using computers. Pupils demonstrate that they are familiar with the positions of the oceans, continents and key mountain ranges of the world. They apply the skills they have learned when they study overseas locations such as India. This topic contributes strongly to pupils' understanding of other cultures and give rise to good written work. Pupils learn a lot about the importance of water and about some of the causes of pollution when they compare life in an Indian village with their own environment. Learning in geography is enhanced by pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Most are able to concentrate well and are enthusiastic learners. They co-operate well when asked to work in groups.
113. The quality of teaching in geography is good. Teachers' secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and their careful planning ensure that pupils learn well. They acquire sound factual knowledge and skills. Lessons have clear objectives and these are shared with the pupils. As a consequence they know what they are expected to learn. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils because they require a good quantity and standard of written work; for example, Year 2 pupils successfully write poems about weather and write a description of the climate of a hot desert. In Year 4's work on India their writing shows that they are developing good appreciation of life in a different environment. Also in a Year 4 class, pupils conducted a survey of noise 'hot spots' in the school building. They then had to write an account of their findings, giving reasons. Classes are well managed and pupils' learning is well supported by effective monitoring of activities by teachers and learning support assistants. Lessons support numeracy when pupils collect data and draw and interpret graphs and charts. An example of this is found in a Year 2 lesson when they compile information about their parent's workplaces. Teachers usually ensure that lessons move at a brisk pace so that good use is made of the time available. They give good support to pupils who have special needs so that they are able to learn well. Work is well matched to pupils' attainment levels. Information and communication technology is used to support learning in geography.
114. The subject has strong leadership and is well managed. The schemes of work ensure that there is a broad and balanced curriculum and that there is continuity across the year groups. There are good procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment in geography and the results are used effectively in the planning of work. Good use is made of the local area for investigative fieldwork. The quality and range of learning resources for geography are good. Since the last inspection there have been a number of improvements. Pupils' attainment is now in line with national expectations. Teachers make appropriate provision for differing attainment levels when preparing work. Planning is now good and assessment is used effectively.

HISTORY

115. In history, pupils are working at levels that match national expectations. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1, they appreciate that things change over time. They understand that children in the past played with different toys from those used today and that seaside holidays were not always the same as they are now. They also have a good understanding of the lives and times of famous people such as Louis Braille and of important events like the Great Fire of London.
116. By the age of nine, pupils understand the importance of source materials and that they often need to be treated with care. With guidance most are able to sift through accounts of people and events and extract the relevant information; for example, Year 4 pupils read about Anne Boleyn and answer questions about her life. All pupils achieve well in this task because the difficulty of the passages is graded. As a consequence higher attaining pupils are challenged and those with reading difficulties are given less demanding extracts and picture clues. They develop good understanding of life in Tudor times and of the important events of the period such as the Spanish Armada. Pupils' work shows that they acquire sound knowledge of the Romans and they study the local area and understand how it has changed over time.
117. The quality of history teaching is good. Teachers plan activities well so that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. Their learning is good because of teachers' high expectations; for example, in a Year 4 lesson on the Tudors, they are required to read some challenging texts and find relevant information. They write at length about the life of Henry VIII. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also learn well because teachers provide materials and tasks appropriate to their needs and are good at celebrating the achievements of those with learning difficulties. Classes are well managed. Teachers and learning support assistants circulate effectively, ensuring that pupils are on task and they receive appropriate help. There is strong emphasis on listening and speaking skills. The youngest pupils learn that it is important to express themselves clearly and that they must listen when others are talking. Pupils generally demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and behave well. In a few cases, however, it is the very skilful management of the teacher which ensures that they remain on task.
118. The subject has good management and is well led. The schemes of work provide a broad and balanced curriculum and ensure that there is continuity across the key stages and year groups. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding are built into the plans and the results are used when evaluating the curriculum. Resources for history are satisfactory. The school is in the process of building up its supply of artefacts in order to reduce its reliance on the loan services. Since the last inspection there have been some improvements. The quality of teaching is now good and the weaknesses highlighted in the last report are no longer in evidence. There is now good provision for higher attaining pupils and overall attainment levels are in line with expectations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

119. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory at both key stages. Following the recent introduction of the information and communication technology suite, access and skills have improved a great deal. Children at both Key Stages can log on to the computers effectively, use the mouse and keyboard, select suitable programs and undertake appropriate activities as directed by their teachers. However, it is too soon to have had a great impact on teaching and learning. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can do simple searches of the Internet to find information, and compare this as a source of information to books and other conventional media. They can create and amend pictures, and add labels to them. By the end of Year 4, pupils can search for information in a simple database, and create and amend data.

120. The quality of teaching in the subject across the school is satisfactory. At Key Stage 1, all the teaching was satisfactory or better, with the majority being good. At Key Stage 2, all the teaching was satisfactory with 20 per cent of the lessons being good. In view of the recent introduction of the ICT suite, teachers are getting to grips with its use and learning effective teaching strategies for working with their classes. Lessons were well planned, although on some occasions, ICT skills were being taught in isolation, where they would have been more effective if placed in a curriculum context. Where learning support assistants were available, they were deployed effectively to support pupils. The size of classes affected the quality of teaching. In the larger classes of Key Stage 2 as most of the class had to share computers, this demanded more in the way of classroom management skills of the teachers concerned.
121. The quality of learning reflected the quality of teaching. It was good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Because of this, pupils made satisfactory to good progress during lessons, and across time. Pupils with special educational needs had appropriate support and made the same progress as the rest of their class. Higher attaining pupils were able to make good use of the facilities to develop their skills.
122. The school has achieved a great deal since the last inspection. By successfully gaining external funding, they have enabled resources to improve considerably, having installed a specialist ICT suite, with suitable software and Internet access. Standards achieved in ICT have improved and are now close to national expectations. The school has targeted the development of ICT skills amongst pupils, however, this has taken place at the expense of supporting other subjects. The school now needs to ensure that the ICT facilities are used to a much greater extent, particularly to support numeracy and literacy.
123. In a minority of classes, the computers were being used effectively as a curriculum support. In one Key Stage 1 class, pupils are using a word bank to complete sentences as a follow up to their class literacy lesson. However, in a Key Stage 2 class, pupils are learning keyboard skills, and opportunities to develop other subject skills are missed.
124. All classes need to ensure that ICT is used effectively for curriculum support as well as for developing ICT skills. Although pupils with special educational needs had equal access to ICT facilities and lessons, there were no examples of use to specifically assist pupils to overcome their difficulties; for example, there were occasions where pupils with special needs would have benefited, by having access to a word processor or spell checker.
125. The subject is effectively managed across the school, and appropriate policy documents are in place. However, the technical management of the systems (making backups, installing software, sorting out problems) takes up the teacher's release time, preventing her from monitoring or supporting other classes and frustrating further development work. The school needs to look at providing sufficient time for technical management of the systems so that the co-ordinator has time to develop the subject further.

MUSIC

126. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4, attainment is similar to that expected from pupils of the same age. No lessons were observed in Year 4 due to time tabling arrangements. However, scrutiny of work and teachers' planning confirms this judgement. Pupils sing, play percussion instruments, listen to and compose their own music. They sing well in assemblies and show a good memory for the words. Pupils in Year 1 listen to the sounds of different percussion instruments and suggest what they might represent. They watch a short extract from a video of Fantasia and listen to the way that Saint-Saen's music was used to illustrate the sound of water. Year 3 pupils use short rhythmic patterns and voices to make the sound of a machine. They combine these together to form a short and effective composition that they perform to each other. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make good progress. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good. They enjoy the different activities and work co-operatively, when required.
127. Teaching is satisfactory. Careful planning ensures that the curriculum is covered. However, there is inadequate provision for pupils to use tuned percussion instruments in lessons. Occasionally, teachers use their own musical skills in lessons and this aids pupils' learning; for example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils, quickly understood the difference between high and low sounds when the teacher demonstrated by using his own voice. A singing practice is held once a week for the whole school and this enables pupils to gain confidence in vocal skills. Good classroom displays of musical notation, compositions and instruments further enhance pupils' understanding. Pupils are made aware of the music of other cultures. During the inspection week a CD of Indian music was played in the hall before and after school.
128. The subject is satisfactorily managed. A detailed scheme of work is in place and opportunity is provided for pupils to perform in assemblies and in school concerts. There are no extra-curricular activities at present as there is no specialist teacher on the staff. This prevents pupils from further developing performing skills. There is good accommodation and resources for the subject. There has been a visit from a violinist from the Kent Music School. Pupils have taken part in a music day at Minster College.
129. The school has addressed the weakness in provision highlighted in the previous inspection report. There is now a detailed scheme of work in place to support teaching. Music provision in school would be enhanced by a teacher with a music specialism.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

130. On entry to school, few pupils have well-developed movement or games skills, or have had opportunities for formal play learning experiences. At the time pupils leave school in Year 4, their attainment is below expectations for their age in this area of the curriculum. By the age of seven, attainment is below national expectations. Pupils are making sound progress at each key stage and in a few lessons progress is good. Progress in games is particularly good. The most able pupils attain standards in line with those expected. The school offers an adequate provision for the subject but during the inspection it was only possible to observe one dance and several games lessons.
131. The younger pupils are able to use a wide variety of skills and movements in gymnastics, athletics and games. In a Year 2 dance, lesson pupils performed dance movements but only the higher attaining pupils were able to repeat or refine their sequence. In games skills practice, pupils achieve well but their ability to strike, throw and catch a ball are at the early stages of development. The older pupils are developing a range of team game skills and the beginnings of tactical awareness in a

game situation. However, few are able to evaluate, consolidate and improve their performances without close teacher supervision. In Key Stage 2, the higher attaining pupils can throw a ball with accuracy and power but most pupils are not able to catch or strike a ball consistently. Few have more than a basic understanding of fielding tactics. In a Year 4 games lesson, boys achieved more success than girls in a game situation and this was generally the case. Pupils with a wide range of special educational needs make sound progress.

132. Pupils respond well, with enthusiasm, enjoyment and hard work. They usually endeavour to do their best and are keen to participate, although some lose concentration when the pace of lessons is too slow. They consistently behave well in lessons and are aware of safety and health issues.
133. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall with some good examples of teaching in Key Stage 2. In most lessons teachers had sound expertise and real enthusiasm for the subject. They managed lessons and pupils well and used a brisk pace with clear instructions to promote good learning skills. The expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are usually good. All teaching was satisfactory but in a few Key Stage 1 lessons it took too long to get the pupils engaged in physical activity. The planning of lessons was sound, following an appropriate structure of warm up, followed by a skills practice and game context. This is in contrast to the previous inspection when the arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting were judged to be good.
134. The school has appointed a hard working and dedicated co-ordinator who has upgraded the schemes of work and provides good support for colleagues. Recently the development of the subject has been restricted by other school priorities such as literacy and numeracy. There has been a useful programme for monitoring teaching and the curriculum so the school is in a sound position to develop the subject further. The school has good resources and accommodation that includes a hall, playing field and hard court area. The amount of extra-curricular sport and activities is good and pupils regularly compete successfully against other schools.
135. The previous inspection found that attainment in physical education was below expectations for the age group and this is still generally the case. The school has maintained the profile of attainment but subject leadership and curriculum issues are significant improvements.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

136. At the end of both Key Stage 1 and Year 4, attainment is broadly in line with that outlined in the Local Education Authority's Agreed Syllabus for religious education. There are no significant differences in attainment between girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve standards in line with their prior ability.
137. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know the main festivals of the Christian calendar. They can recount some Bible stories and the main characters, such as Jesus choosing his disciples and the story of Zaccheus. They are able to name the main parts of a Christian church and the parts they play in various ceremonies. Year 1 pupils; for example, can describe the symbols and ceremony associated with baptism. In Year 2; pupils can understand the difference between festivals and other types of celebration. Pupils are able to talk about people who are important to themselves or to others. They discuss ideas of right from wrong and express their ideas clearly.

138. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they are familiar with the main festivals of Christianity and of those in other religions and faiths such as Passover and Hanukkah. They continue their studies of religious symbols across a number of religions and are able to identify different religious buildings such as mosques and synagogues. At the time of the inspection, Year 4 pupils were doing interesting work in studying the significance of the Aum symbol to Hindus. In this key stage pupils have opportunities to extend their writing skills. Higher attaining pupils, in particular make good use of this to produce good paragraphs expressing their own ideas and this makes an effective contribution to literacy development.
139. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in five-sixths of the lessons it is good. All the lessons in religious education are taught by one teacher who has very good subject knowledge and handles teaching about a number of religions with confidence. This brings gains to pupils in terms of a wider knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. Planning for lessons and over the longer term is systematic and careful and this provides pupils with a course that has good continuity. All the teaching is characterised by good pupil control, which is achieved with sensitivity and patience. Pupils respond to this and show very good behaviour in class and very good attitudes to work. The working atmosphere encourages pupils to discuss their feelings and thoughts and show a high degree of respect for the feelings of others. The pace to lessons is brisk and work presents a good level of challenge to raise pupils' attainment. The teacher has good methods to maintain pace and interest, including good use of question and answer to encourage discussion and bring out the main points of the lesson.
140. The previous report stated that the Locally Agreed Syllabus was not fully implemented. This has been rectified and the syllabus and scheme of work are now highly detailed and fully meet the statutory requirements. At the time of the previous report, pupils had limited knowledge and made unsatisfactory progress. Bearing in mind the low level of pupils' attainment on entry, they now develop good factual knowledge and make good progress overall. Behaviour, which was satisfactory in the previous report, is now very good and relationships in the classroom are also very good. These gains have occurred mostly as a result of improvements in teaching since that time.
141. The subject makes a very good contribution both to pupils' personal development and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is clearly a spiritual element in many lessons, which encourages pupils to reflect up on their lives and the lives of other people. As well as teaching about religious views there is a strong moral dimension in lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong so that they know what is acceptable behaviour. In lessons pupils have opportunities for discussion and to listen to the views of others. They also work regularly in pairs and groups during lessons and this adds to their social development.
142. There are good procedures for assessment which enable pupils' progress and attainment to be checked accurately. These procedures have been used to change and develop the curriculum since the previous inspection. The leadership and management of the subject have been outstanding in developing it from the previous inspection to a position of some strength where attainment is in line with that expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The subject has made excellent progress since the previous inspection.