

INSPECTION REPORT

DARENTH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Darenth, Dartford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118245

Headteacher: Mr Simon Manning

Reporting inspector: Dr Vivien Johnston
8402

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th September 2001

Inspection number: 208237
Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Green Street Green Road
Darenth
Dartford
Kent

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Cutler

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8402	Dr Vivien Johnston	Registered inspector	English Art Geography History Equal Opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9595	Mrs Susan Cash	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?
28069	Mr David Mylroie	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Religious Education Special Educational Needs	How well is the school led and managed?
20760	Mrs Sheila Roberts	Team inspector	Science Music Physical Education Foundation Stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a one-form entry community school for infant and junior pupils from Darenth village and the surrounding area. It has 139 boys and girls in Years 1 to 6, and 19 children who attend the reception class on a part-time basis this term. Almost all the pupils are white. No pupils speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of the pupils, just under a third, are from traveller families, though the number in each year group varies considerably. Pupils' social backgrounds are relatively disadvantaged. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is well below average compared to schools nationally, partly because very few children have had pre-school experience such as in playgroups. Forty per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is well above the national average. Mostly, their needs relate to learning difficulties. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need. Many pupils join or leave the school during the infants and juniors. Comparatively few of the children who started in the reception class were still at the school in Year 6 in 1999 and 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is currently satisfactory, having improved recently. The results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 improved considerably in 2001, after having fallen to a very low level. The standards pupils attain are improving, though still well below average overall. In the school as a whole, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous levels of attainment. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in several year groups. Several subjects are well led and managed, teaching and learning are satisfactory, and the staff are committed to continuing development. However, the school is led and managed with insufficient rigour. The cost per pupil is higher than in most schools. Taking the above factors into account, and the disadvantaged educational and social backgrounds of the pupils, the school now provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are rising as a result of recent improvements to the curriculum, teaching and computer resources.
- Pupils in several classes are learning well because the teaching is challenging and interesting.
- The school is a friendly environment in which relationships are good, pupils have positive attitudes towards learning, and the children from traveller families are well integrated.
- The staff are caring, know the pupils as individuals, and are approachable to their parents.
- Social and moral values, including good behaviour, are promoted strongly.

What could be improved

- The teaching of English, and of literacy in other subjects.
- Pupils' skills and confidence in learning independently.
- The strategic management of the school, including being more systematic and rigorous in planning and implementing changes, and monitoring the quality of what is done more closely.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning, and use of this information to help raise standards.
- Pupils' attendance, and their punctuality in the morning.
- Links between the school and parents, to help parents give more support to their children's learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1998. Its improvement since then was held back for some time by staffing difficulties, but is unsatisfactory overall. Results in the tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 fell to a low point in 2000, but the Year 6 results went up considerably in 2001. Standards are similar to those reported previously. The weaknesses in pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing have been recognised but not tackled systematically. The school still does not do enough to monitor and evaluate its work, and its development plan lacks the necessary rigour. Good arrangements for assessing the standard of pupils' work have been introduced recently, but as yet teachers do not have

detailed records on which to base their planning for pupils' learning. Some of the key issues identified by the last inspection have been dealt with successfully. These include improving lesson plans by identifying what pupils are expected to learn, and providing support assistants in the literacy hour to help pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are now better, and pupils' work is attractively displayed in classrooms. Standards in mathematics, science and ICT are rising as a result of purposeful management of these subjects during the last school year. The school now has a more experienced staff than was the case following the last inspection. Its recent improvement is satisfactory, and it has the capacity to continue the current upward trend.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	E	E*	E*
mathematics	C	E	E*	E*
science	D	E	E*	E*

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

Children enter the reception year with well below average attainment for their age. In relation to this, their achievement during the year is satisfactory although the standards they have attained are still well below average at the start of Year 1. The standard pupils attain by the end of Year 2 is also well below average. Their achievement is unsatisfactory overall because they make insufficient progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing, which affects the quality of their learning in other subjects. Results in the tests at the end of Year 2 have been consistently low. In 2000, the results in reading and writing were in the lowest five per cent nationally, having fallen steadily for several years. In contrast, the trend in mathematics results was of an improvement from very low in 1998 and 1999 to well below average in 2000. The reading, writing and mathematics results were in the lowest five per cent nationally compared to similar schools in 2000. The 2001 results were similar to those for 2000.

In the tests at the end of Year 6, the English, mathematics and science results improved from 1996 to 1998, when they were similar to national results overall. The results then fell, and in 2000 were in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally and of similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). In 1999 and 2000, the results were affected by pupil turnover – most of the new pupils entered the school with low levels of attainment. The Year 6 pupils' results were in line with those predicted on the basis of their test results at the end of Year 2, and the school met its targets for English and mathematics. In 2001, the results in all three subjects went up considerably.

The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 6 pupils' attainment overall is well below average, although their attainment in mathematics, science and ICT is below average. Standards in English and several other subjects are well below average. However, pupils in the juniors are now achieving satisfactorily overall in relation to their previous levels of attainment, due to recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum, and so standards are improving.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and generally work willingly. The older pupils appreciate being given responsibilities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Behaviour is good at breaks and lunchtime. In lessons, most pupils behave sensibly but a few lack concentration and

	need firm management. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall. Relationships are good and so the school is a friendly environment. Pupils show concern for others' feelings, but some are thoughtless about the impact of their behaviour on others' learning. Almost all lack confidence, independence and initiative in learning, and so are very dependent on adults for guidance.
Attendance	Very poor. The attendance rate is much lower than in schools nationally, with much unauthorised absence. Some pupils are regularly late in the morning. Absence and lateness affect many pupils' learning because important work is missed and pupils then have difficulty catching up.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with strengths in the teaching of children in the reception class and the older pupils in the juniors. Pupils' learning is satisfactory, but not as good as the teaching because of the difficulties caused by many pupils' weak skills in literacy and lack of confidence in learning. Numeracy is taught satisfactorily. The teaching of mathematics is good, whereas the teaching of English is unsatisfactory because the skills of reading and writing are not taught well enough in English and other subjects. In general, teaching meets the needs of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs better than those who are of higher attainment.

Strengths in much teaching include well-planned lessons with a variety of challenging activities that motivate the pupils and keep them working hard, firm management of pupils' behaviour together with encouragement of positive attitudes, and effective use of questioning that involves all the class. Pupils work willingly in these lessons. Pupils with special educational needs, those new to the school, and those from traveller families are involved well in class activities. Teachers make too much use of worksheets and copying information, which slows pupils' progress in learning to write independently. Most marking is too brief to be informative to pupils, and too little use is made of homework to extend the learning of older pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, together with religious education but too little time is given for this subject. Pupils have too few opportunities for ICT during lessons in other subjects. A good variety of activities is provided outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Teachers know the needs of the pupils, and take care to involve them in lesson activities. Support assistants provide useful help, in lessons and when the pupils are withdrawn for special work on reading and writing. The individual education plans are not specific enough about the pupils' targets and how they are to be met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Teachers promote moral and social values strongly, in lessons, assemblies and at other times of the day. Spiritual and cultural development are provided for satisfactorily, as is pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares	Good behaviour is promoted well, and the school has satisfactory procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. The

for its pupils	arrangements for checking how well pupils are doing and tracking their progress are unsatisfactory, but are being improved.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory information is given on children's progress, but the school does not do enough to involve parents in their children's education. Most parents provide too little support for their children's learning at school and at home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There are strengths in the promotion of a happy, caring school and in how some subjects are led and managed. Planned improvements have not been followed through well enough, and so the leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. The governors are very supportive of the school and its staff. They now have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and are committed to ensuring that it does well in future. Statutory requirements are met except that the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents have some omissions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school is not systematic and rigorous enough in checking how well it is doing.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. The school has sufficient accommodation, learning resources and staff, who are deployed appropriately. The resources are good for ICT but the library is inadequate and the buildings are not cared for well. The school checks that it gets value for money for its items of expenditure and sets appropriate targets for pupils' results, but does not take enough account of parents' views.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information they receive on how their children are getting on. The approachability of the school if they have questions or a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some pupils' behaviour. The amount of homework that is set. The closeness with which the school works with parents. The leadership and management of the school. The help provided to enable their children to become mature and responsible. The range of activities provided outside lessons.

The views summarised above were expressed by a minority of parents since only 28 questionnaires were returned out of the 154 sent out. Attendance at the meeting before the inspection was very low. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by most parents. The team also agrees with some parents, that homework, the closeness of links with parents and the leadership and management of the school should be improved. The team found that overall pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, as is the support provided to enable pupils to become mature and responsible, and that a good range of activities is provided outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the reception year with attainment that is well below average for their age. In relation to this, their achievement during the year is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the standards attained by the pupils who have just completed the reception year and entered Year 1 are well below average.

2. Results in the tests at the end of Year 2 have been low for several years. In 2000, the results were very low in reading and writing, and well below the national average in mathematics. In mathematics, the trend is of an improvement similar to that nationally. Reading and writing results fell between 1998 and 2000, whereas the national trend was of an improvement. Boys' and girls' results have varied from year to year, but a significant trend is not evident because comparatively small numbers of boys and girls took the tests in most years. The results in 2001 were similar to those for 2000, in the percentage who gained the expected Level 2 or better. At the time of the inspection, national data was not available for the inspection team to make comparisons with the national average in 2001, nor with the results for similar schools.

3. From 1996 to 2000, the overall trend in results at the end of Year 6 is below the national trend. By 1998, they had risen to close to the national figure, but then they fell sharply. The school's data show that this fall was related to a difference in the nature of each Year 6 class. In 1999, about half the Year 6 pupils had joined the school during the juniors, and in 2000 this proportion rose to about three-quarters. Many of these pupils had experienced interrupted schooling, and their attainment was low on entry to the juniors.

4. The school has analysed the 2000 and 2001 results of the pupils who had been at the school for both the Year 2 and the Year 6 tests. The analysis shows that almost all made at least the expected gains, and some low-attaining pupils did better than expected. Some of those who did not meet their targets had high levels of absence from school, for example because they had been travelling. Others had joined the school during the juniors, with low levels of attainment.

5. The school's targets for results in the Year 6 tests have been sufficiently challenging. The targets for English and mathematics were met in 2000. The targets anticipated the low results: 36 per cent of the pupils were expected to gain Level 4 or higher in English, and 40 per cent in mathematics. In 2001, the school expected 65 per cent to gain Level 4 or higher in English and 70 per cent in mathematics. The English target was slightly exceeded, but the mathematics target was not met.

6. The results for science were higher than those for English and mathematics in 2001, whereas in previous years the science results had generally been lower.

7. The standard pupils attain by the end of Year 2 is well below average overall, when account is taken of their performance in all subjects. Their achievement in the infants is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in the teaching and learning of English. Pupils make too little progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and this affects their learning in other subjects including mathematics, science, geography, history and religious education. The evidence indicates that they do better in practical subjects such as physical education, where literacy difficulties have less impact on their learning. Other factors that affect pupils' achievement include absence from school, pupils' lack of confidence as learners, and some pupils' difficulty in concentrating in lessons. Standards appear to be lower than reported by the last inspection.

8. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 6 pupils' overall attainment is also well below average, and lower than reported by the last inspection. Their work in mathematics (including numeracy across the curriculum), science and ICT is better than this: their attainment is below average in these subjects. Here, standards have risen because of improvements to teaching and the curriculum. Standards in English are well below average, and pupils' difficulties with literacy continue to affect the quality of their work in other subjects. As in the infants, the evidence available during the inspection indicated that pupils in the juniors do better in

physical education than in geography, history and religious education. However, these pupils are now achieving satisfactorily overall in relation to their previous levels of attainment, helped by purposeful teaching and the recent adoption of nationally-produced units of work in many subjects. This national guidance on planning is also being used in the infants, with the aim of raising standards, but has yet to have a significant impact on pupils' achievement.

9. In general, pupils of all ages are more successful in oral activities than when reading and writing. Oral activities showed that many pupils' knowledge in subjects such as mathematics, science and geography is better than their ability to record it. The presentation of much written work is untidy, with weak spelling and handwriting.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress during their time in the school and so their achievement is satisfactory, although most do not attain the nationally-expected standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. The school's analysis of test results shows that most of these pupils make at least the gains expected of them, in relation to their attainment on entry to the reception year and subsequently to their results in the national tests at the end of Year 2.

11. Pupils from traveller families also achieve satisfactorily. Those who attend school regularly do as well as other pupils. Most of those who have extended time away from school miss too much work to be able to reach the nationally-expected standards, although teachers do their best to help them catch up. Frequent absence from school also affects the achievement of some pupils who are not from traveller families.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Most pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They have positive attitudes to their work, as was found by the last inspection. The older pupils generally settle quickly to the tasks they are given in lessons, whereas many of the younger pupils are still learning how to pay attention and concentrate on their work. Nevertheless, most pupils of all ages listen attentively to their teacher and quickly do as they are asked. When they understand what to do and the work is appropriately challenging and interesting, pupils work willingly and generally persevere well. This was particularly evident in the ICT and physical education lessons observed, as pupils rose to the challenges provided and were proud of what they achieved. They were also observed working well together in small groups, for example helping each other in mathematics lessons.

13. Many pupils are very dependent on adult support and reassurance in lessons, as they lack confidence in learning and so wait to be told what to do. For example, pupils had to be reminded that they could use a dictionary to help them spell correctly. Pupils generally concentrate better and participate more willingly in oral activities. When set reading or writing tasks, the younger pupils tend to lose attention and become chatty and restless. Pupils of all ages have little awareness of their own learning needs and what they need to focus on in order to improve the quality of their work. They need firm management together with activities that are closely matched to their needs and interests. When both are provided, they work and learn well.

14. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory overall. Pupils respond well to the firm, positive way in which teachers manage class activities. Pupils of all ages enjoy being given house points and are disappointed when they lose 'Golden Time' for misdemeanours. They are clear about what behaviour is expected because this was discussed in each class at the start of the school year. However, several classes have a small group of pupils (usually boys) who find it difficult to behave appropriately. Teachers usually manage these pupils well, but their attention-seeking behaviour sometimes disrupts the learning of others. For example, in several lessons pupils called out answers during whole-class discussion, and the teacher had to stop the lesson in order to re-establish a calm atmosphere in which pupils listened to each other and took turns. This took up valuable learning time.

15. In contrast, pupils behave well at lunchtime and in the playground. They, and their parents, say there is little bullying and that the rare incidents which do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. There have been no exclusions for several years.

16. Pupils with special educational needs behave sensibly in class when they are well supported and the work is adapted to meet their needs. They are appreciative of the attention and help they are given. In several lessons, they responded with enthusiasm to working with a support assistant because discussion enabled them to think of interesting ideas, which were recorded for them and subsequently shared with the rest of the class. They showed pleasure and pride in what they had accomplished.

17. Pupils respond well to the good example that adults generally set, through the positive way they deal with pupils. Relationships throughout the school are good. In interviews, several pupils said that they value the friendships they have made at school. The traveller children are welcomed and well integrated. They work and play with other pupils co-operatively. Pupils of all ages show a good degree of care for their classmates, comforting those who are distressed and helping each other. Older pupils, especially school councillors, help the younger ones at lunchtimes and in the playground. This contributes well to the whole-school ethos of friendliness. Class monitors like to perform helpful tasks such as taking the register to the school office, but pupils do not show much independence and initiative.

18. Levels of attendance are among the lowest in the country, and are lower than reported by the last inspection. A significant percentage of absence is due to the movement of traveller families. However, the rate of absence among other pupils is also higher than average, and much of this absence is unexplained by parents. The high rate of absence affects many pupils' learning because they miss work. Lower-attaining pupils find it particularly difficult to catch up, and so fall further behind the rest of the class. Pupils' punctuality in the morning is unsatisfactory. Some pupils regularly arrive up to half an hour after the start of lessons, and so miss work. Improving pupils' attendance and punctuality is a key issue for the school because standards will not rise if pupils are not in school regularly and promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching and learning is higher than reported by the last inspection. Almost all the teaching observed was satisfactory or better. About half of the teaching observed was good or better, which is a lower proportion than in many schools. The most consistently effective teaching was seen in the reception class and in the older juniors' classes. The teaching of mathematics, science and ICT as a separate subject is considerably better than that of English.

20. Occasionally, teaching and learning were judged to be very good. In these lessons, which were observed in ICT and science, the work matched the pupils' needs very well, and all in the class were interested and challenged by the activities. The pace of these lessons was demanding, giving the pupils a sense of urgency. This was usually accomplished by setting a series of tasks that extended pupils' understanding and skills step by step. The aim of these tasks was explained clearly at the start of the lesson, and pupils were given regular guidance on how to move on to the next challenge. The teacher monitored how well the pupils were coping very closely, and so was able to intervene effectively and promptly. This meant that pupils worked hard throughout the lesson. The aims were returned to at the end, in a whole-class review of what pupils had learned. They showed pride in their achievements, and gained confidence.

21. Other strengths seen in many lessons included teachers' thorough planning, and the support they gave to pupils who had difficulty with the work. In most lessons, a variety of activities kept the work interesting, and teachers gave much praise for correct answers and good behaviour. In several lessons, teachers showed good concern for health and safety, as when Year 3 pupils were introduced to using physical

education apparatus in the hall. Occasionally, pupils' learning was reinforced by teachers making links between subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils drawing leaves collected in the school grounds during an art lesson were reminded about the mini-beasts they had looked at earlier in science work. Occasionally, teachers made good use of opportunities to reinforce pupils' moral and social development, for instance when Year 4 pupils learning about Sikhism were reminded of the school's ethos of helping each other, which was also an assembly theme.

22. Teachers consistently showed high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and managed classroom activities firmly. Usually, this was done effectively, but in some lessons it took up much time. The younger pupils had most difficulty in focusing on their learning. Partly, this was because the inspection took place very early in the autumn term and so the teachers were still reminding their classes of the school's expectations of their attitudes and behaviour in lessons. Sometimes, though, the pupils became restless because the work was not appropriately matched to their needs or they lacked confidence in tackling it.

23. Few pupils are confident, independent learners. Most stop working when they encounter a difficulty, and wait for adult help. Some are easily distracted, and become talkative instead of getting on with the work they have been set. A few use their initiative to resolve difficulties with their work, such as using a dictionary to check how to spell a word, but most depend on adults to help them out. This slows the pace of their learning.

24. The pupils from traveller families were interested in the lessons, and generally worked willingly when they understood what to do and how to do it. Their attitudes, motivation and effort in lessons were similar to those of the other pupils. Some showed good levels of concentration and effort. In oral work, the traveller pupils were often keen to answer questions. Mostly, they co-operated well with other pupils in pair and small group activities. However, in several classes traveller boys were easily distracted and took up much of the adults' time during reading and writing activities – as did some other pupils in the class, usually boys. In all cases, however, they accepted teachers' reprimands, and worked willingly when given the attention and support they needed.

25. Teachers now generally group pupils appropriately for literacy and numeracy lessons, and support assistants are present to work with lower-attaining and special educational needs pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection, and contributes to these pupils making satisfactory progress. Sometimes, their learning was good because the teacher had adapted the work carefully to meet their needs. In several lessons, communication between the teacher and learning support assistant was good. For example, the support assistant was given clear information as to what the teacher intended the pupils to learn, and was involved in assessing the pupils' work when it had been completed. Pupils with special educational needs also work well when they are withdrawn from their class to work in smaller groups. They discuss what they are doing sensibly, with each other and with adults. The needs of higher-attaining pupils are given less attention, and sometimes the work is not demanding enough for them.

26. Pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and of what to do to improve is relatively weak. It contributes to pupils' lack of confidence as learners, and makes it hard for them to work independently. Teachers give pupils insufficient guidance and feedback on their learning. Some marking is regular and helpful, giving clear guidance on what has been done well and how to improve in future, but this is not the norm across the school. Most teachers make too little use of target-setting for the pupils in their classes. In the few examples seen of teachers setting targets, pupils worked with

more commitment and confidence, and their learning was often good. Pupils with special educational needs are not involved in setting their targets in their individual education plans. Insufficient use is made of homework to extend the learning of the older pupils, and to encourage pupils of all ages to read widely. The inspection team agrees with the parents who expressed concern about the amount of homework that is set, although some work is provided.

27. Pupils' written work from the last school year showed that some teachers have made too much use of worksheets, on which pupils have written one-word or short answers. The worksheets generally involve recording factual information, and miss opportunities to promote understanding and reflection, as well as to consolidate pupils' literacy skills. In several subjects, particularly geography and history, too much time has been spent on undemanding colouring activities. Sometimes, pupils have had to copy out a short passage, inserting words to fill gaps in the text. The higher-attaining pupils have generally completed these passages, while those with weak literacy skills have not. As a result, pupils have had too few opportunities for independent writing, and for work that goes beyond recording information. However, the worksheets used in science are helpful as they provide a structure for pupils' scientific thinking. A further weakness in many classes is that teachers have not made sufficient use of ICT within their teaching of other subjects.

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

28. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The school now provides a satisfactorily broad and relevant curriculum that meets statutory requirements, including for sex education. It makes appropriate arrangements for personal and health education, such as through 'circle time' sessions.

29. Although the teaching time is now in line with national guidelines, the time allocated to subjects is still not balanced satisfactorily. In particular, religious education has less than the minimum time needed to teach the subject to a satisfactory standard. Some subjects are taught in sessions that are far too long, and so pupils lose concentration and the rate of their learning slows. These subjects include science and physical education. However, teachers' planning is now better, as is the provision for ICT as a subject, and swimming is included as part of the curriculum for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Although some use of ICT is made in other subjects, this is not systematic enough. The school has successfully introduced both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and the curriculum for children in the reception class meets the requirements of the early learning goals for the Foundation Stage.

30. Coverage of the National Curriculum has improved because the school has adopted units of work based on national guidelines. These units of work provide a good basis for teachers' lesson planning, and for developing pupils' knowledge and skills through interesting and challenging activities. Some subject co-ordinators are now adapting these plans to fit the school's needs more closely. However, as yet the school has not developed its own curriculum map to show how the knowledge and skills focused on in each unit of work build up systematically from year to year, and to plan links between the teaching of different subjects. In particular, the school has not planned for how pupils' literacy and numeracy skills will be developed in all subjects.

31. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Children of traveller families have good support to enable them to achieve their potential. The curriculum taught to pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They are given equal opportunities for success as they are encouraged and enabled to take part in all school activities. The individual education plans drawn

up for pupils with special educational needs focus mainly on language development. The plans identify what each pupil needs to learn to overcome his or her problems and what help is to be given. However, the targets and strategies given on the plans are not precise enough. For example, many of the plans scrutinised during the inspection identified phonics as an area for development during the term, but did not say which phonic sounds were to be covered and when. The plans provide too little guidance to class teachers on how to meet individual pupils' needs and build up their knowledge and skills systematically. Despite this weakness, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall because class teachers know their pupils well and provide considerable support in lessons, resulting in the pupils making satisfactory progress.

32. Some parents felt that the school provides too few activities outside lessons. However, the inspection team found that the extra-curricular provision is good, when the comparatively small size of the school is taken into account. Pupils have access to a variety of clubs, which include sport, mathematics, computer and choir. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places such as Hever Castle for work in history, places of worship to support religious education, the Science Museum and farm visits. The Reception and Year 1 classes visit the local area, to find out about their environment. The school also promotes pupils' learning outside the school day – there is extra provision to extend older, higher-attaining pupils in the Friday Club. These pupils have had the opportunity to design and construct models leading to awards. Supported by the local authority's environmental centre for schools, they have drawn up a school nature trail for which a monetary award was granted.

33. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Spiritual development is sound, as is cultural development. Spiritual development is promoted mainly through assemblies and in some religious education lessons. Pupils occasionally have opportunities to reflect and wonder during lessons, as in Year 2's science lesson when they were finding mini-beasts in the school grounds. The school fulfils the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship. Assemblies are thought provoking, and give opportunities for prayerful reflection. Pupils are occasionally given other opportunities that encourage their spiritual development, as when they said a prayer at the end of a religious education lesson before the lunch break.

34. Staff pay much attention to promoting pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Classes regularly have 'circle time', in which they discuss what is right and wrong at levels suitable for each age group and in relation to issues of current importance to each class. All classes have a set of agreed rules, which are displayed clearly and referred to regularly by the teacher. Emphasis is on the positive side of behaviour. For example, in a Year 4 pupils' assembly the focus was on sharing individual talents, and in an assembly for reception children and infants the topic was thoughtful playground behaviour. Social awareness and responsibility are promoted well. There is a school council, and older pupils are given the responsibility of organising games for younger pupils at breaktimes. A particularly good feature is the school's system of table monitors at lunchtime. A Year 6 pupil sits at each table of younger pupils, to help them and give guidance on manners. Pupils are engaged in helping the less fortunate by charity activities such as collecting toys for children in the Balkans for Christmas. Some parents expressed the view that the school does not provide enough help to enable their children to become mature and responsible, but the inspection team does not agree that this is the case. Overall, the school's promotion of pupils' personal development is satisfactory.

35. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is developed by participation in local events, such as the annual village fair, the choir singing at a retirement home at

Christmas time, and by visitors to the school. During the school's Literacy Week, an author and a storyteller came to talk to the pupils, and a theatre group performed. The wider, multicultural aspect is less well promoted. It is mostly explored through geography and religious education, such as by the study of world religions and visiting a local Sikh temple.

36. The school has good community and business links. It has a good liaison programme with a local secondary school, but no links with pre-school groups as there are none in the immediate locality. The school is a member of the local Business Education Partnership and is participating in a 'Lunch Box Project' with a local store. It also has links with the local Groundwork group and have participated in collecting seeds and planting trees, indigenous to the area.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school takes good care of its pupils. Its first aim is to provide a 'friendly, caring and responsible community'. It is fulfilling this aim well, and pupils feel secure. The procedures for child protection are understood by teachers, and are satisfactory. Due attention is paid to health and safety matters.

38. The school successfully fosters an ethos of caring and mutual respect within which pupils are treated equally and fairly. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Those from traveller families are carefully integrated into school. The school takes a firm stand against bullying, and staff deal effectively with the few instances that they become aware of. However, mid-day supervisors are not given specific advice on managing pupils' behaviour. Assemblies and circle time are used to discuss problems that may arise, which supports the school aims and ethos. This is a small school in which the adults know the pupils well. Any concerns about a pupil are discussed among the staff, and appropriate support is offered. Pupils expressed confidence that there was someone to turn to if they had problems, either personal or to do with work. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are informal but sound.

39. The school has sound systems for monitoring attendance. The education welfare officer checks the registers regularly and is involved with a number of cases of poor attendance. The traveller welfare officer keeps the school well informed about the movements of pupils from traveller families. However, the school does not promote good attendance sufficiently actively. It does not ensure that parents realise that regular and prompt attendance is very important, for example by phoning them on the first day their child is absent if no explanation has been received. Reasons for absence are not strenuously sought. This aspect of the school's work has deteriorated since the last inspection, and attendance levels have fallen significantly over the last few years – partly because of the impact of more traveller pupils having extended absences.

40. The school has good policies and procedures for encouraging appropriate behaviour, and they are generally implemented well. The inspection team did not find evidence to support some parents' concerns about behaviour. This area of the school's work has improved since the last inspection as staff now manage pupils' behaviour more consistently. Pupils discuss classroom rules at the beginning of the school year, so that they are clear about the standard of behaviour their class teacher expects. Staff use a combination of rewards and sanctions to motivate pupils to behave well. These include gaining house points and privilege or 'Golden' time, and being given red cards warning pupils that their behaviour is not acceptable and may lead to a loss of privileges. The school tries hard to involve parents when a pupil's behaviour gives cause for concern. This good practice has a positive influence on the behaviour of those pupils who find it hard to conform, and so the standard of behaviour in lessons improves as pupils move up the school. This contributes to the older pupils learning better.

41. The school tracks the progress made by pupils with special educational needs satisfactorily. Individual education plans are updated each term. However, the plans do not provide sufficiently clear information. The targets set for each child are too generalised, as are the strategies for meeting them. This reduces the usefulness of the

plans to teachers and pupils, and makes it difficult to track pupils' success in meeting the targets when they are reviewed.

42. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and provide a caring environment to support their learning and personal development. Class teachers generally have a clear understanding of how well each pupil is doing. However, the school's current arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. The last inspection report identified this as a key issue for improvement, and it remains one despite the recent work carried out by the newly-appointed co-ordinator for assessment. These whole-school initiatives to improve assessment procedures are good, but are not yet implemented in full.

43. When children join the reception class, their knowledge and skills are assessed. This is done thoroughly, involving parents. These 'baseline' assessments are then used well, to help plan how the curriculum will be taught and as a starting point from which to measure the children's progress. The baseline assessments also enable the school to predict what each child might achieve in the national tests at the end of Year 2. After the test, staff check whether the predictions were met. These arrangements are good. Predictions for results in the tests at the end of Year 6 are also made, and checked against results. However, pupils' progress from the reception year through to Year 6 is not tracked systematically. A few teachers have introduced target-setting for pupils in their class, and share the targets with their pupils. This has contributed to the pupils learning more purposefully. Too little assessment information is passed to the new teacher for each class in September, but the school plans to introduce end-of-year assessments in order to increase the amount of information available. Teachers generally carry out daily, ongoing assessments and observations, and some make use of this information when planning lessons. Where this is not the case, the work is sometimes not well matched to the pupils' needs. For example, some work does not challenge higher-attaining pupils sufficiently. Assessment procedures have improved considerably in several subjects, notably science and ICT, but are weak in most others, including English. For example, teachers do not keep sufficiently informative records of pupils' progress in reading, and subject leaders have not produced portfolios of work to exemplify the standards expected in the work covered.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents are satisfied with the school. They particularly like the reports they receive on their children's progress. These are brief but to the point and give a clear indication of how well the pupil is doing in each subject. Parents also appreciate the ease with which they can speak to teachers and the headteacher. Face-to-face communication is good, which is of great help to those parents with weaker literacy skills. Open evenings are well attended. The Friends of Darenth School raises funds for the school, enabling events such as the activity week to be provided free of charge. The Christmas Fair is a good social event. The inspection team agrees with parents that the school is approachable, and that reports are informative.

45. However, some parents do not feel that the school works closely with them, and the inspection team agrees that this is an area for improvement. The school could do more to encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning. It provides insufficient information about the curriculum, and so parents cannot help their children at home as much as they would like. Parents have not been widely consulted on developments within the school. Homework is also a concern for some parents, who feel that it is insufficient. The inspection took place too early in the term for pupils to have been given much homework, but they are expected to learn spellings for a weekly test and to read each evening. They also have some mathematics to do each week. Older pupils are given too little other homework to support their learning. The findings of the inspection support parents' concerns about homework and the lack of curricular information.

46. Parents of children starting school in the reception class are well informed. They have a good opportunity to tell the school about their child, in a one-to one interview with the reception class teacher. The headteacher holds a meeting for parents whose children are in Year 6, to explain the complicated options for secondary education, and gives advice on this. Newsletters keep parents adequately informed about school events. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are both very formal documents which do not do the school justice. Neither fully meets statutory requirements.

47. Parental involvement in their children's education is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school has noticed a significant drop in the support in reading given by parents to pupils in the juniors. However, it gives parents too little guidance on how to help their children with reading and writing. Many parents do not send their children to school regularly or promptly, which affects their learning and the standards they attain. Parents are invited to the reviews for pupils who have individual education plans or a statement of special educational need, but few attend these meetings. The targets set in individual education plans are shared with parents, but they are not given a copy of the plan. The plans do not give details of how parents can support their children's learning at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The school's aim to create a caring community is evident in its daily life. The headteacher provides caring leadership, good support for the staff and pupils, and manages the day-to-day running of the school successfully. His strong commitment to the school and its pupils is shared by the other members of the senior management team and staff. The deputy headteacher provides valued support, for example by managing aspects of the school budget, but has heavy commitments as a full-time class teacher.

49. The other staff with management responsibilities also carry out their duties conscientiously, although their effectiveness varies considerably. Several subject co-ordinators have been successful in initiating and following-through changes that have led to pupils making better progress in their learning. As a result, standards are rising in mathematics, science and ICT. However, other subjects such as English, art, geography, history and music are not led and managed well, for a variety of reasons. These include a lack of training in how to carry out the role of subject co-ordinator effectively, lack of subject expertise, no teacher having been delegated responsibility for the subject, and insufficient time being available. Subject co-ordinators do not have guaranteed time for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, and the impact of developments they initiate. However, they support other staff by giving advice, and have organised subject resources. The co-ordinators who have been most successful are active in ensuring that the curriculum plans adopted are implemented effectively, and have been working to improve assessment and its use to inform teaching and learning. They are aware of the need to develop clearer guidance on the progress pupils should make each year, such as by producing portfolios of exemplar work and by planning for better links between subjects. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed satisfactorily overall, although the co-ordinator has insufficient time to carry out this role well.

50. The last inspection report identified aspects of the leadership and management of the governing body within the key issues for improvement. In the questionnaires, some parents expressed concern about how well the school is led and managed. The

inspection team found that some weaknesses in leadership and management remain, though improvements have been made.

51. The governing body is very supportive of the school, and is keen to see it improve while recognising the difficulties it faces due to the nature of its pupils and the area it serves. The governing body is provided with regular information by the headteacher, with whom relationships are good. However, it still relies too much on the headteacher for advice, rather than seeking out information for itself through involvement in a systematic programme of monitoring. For example, governors visit the school to observe lessons, and sometimes to give support. They report their findings to the governing body. The effectiveness of the visits is limited because a specific focus is not agreed in advance, linked to areas that the governing body has identified for finding out about at first hand. Nevertheless, governors have a broad understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school. They approve the school development and improvement plan each year, although they still do not systematically monitor its implementation and the progress made towards its main objectives. The governors are soon to have additional training, so that they can develop their effectiveness further.

52. Almost all statutory requirements are met, but, as at the time of the last inspection, the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents have some omissions.

53. The quality of the school development plan has improved since the last inspection, in response to one of the key issues identified then. It now contains appropriate priorities for development, linked clearly to costs, and covers a three-year period. However, some weaknesses remain. The plan has no overview, to give a clear sense of direction. How the planned activities will be monitored is not clear enough, and most of the criteria for judging success are too vague. The plan includes dates for completing tasks. However, its implementation has not been followed up rigorously, and so some dates have not been met.

54. The school improvement plan was drawn up in consultation with staff, and is largely based on the needs identified by each subject co-ordinator. This is a beneficial arrangement as it has meant that staff are committed to the process of school improvement. However, the plan has not identified some important areas that a more rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses would have revealed. For example, the plan does not provide for improving leadership and management, pupils' learning skills and their literacy and oracy across the curriculum, and their attendance.

55. The strategic development of the school is unsatisfactory. The weaknesses in the school improvement plan arise from this. Another result is that the school has not developed arrangements for ensuring that good practice, such as in subject management, is shared with all members of staff. The headteacher is aware that he has not ensured that developments are carried out systematically, consistently and with rigour, and sees this as the next step towards achieving the school's aim of providing a quality education.

56. The school has introduced a satisfactory system of performance management, based on the nationally-recommended framework. Teachers' targets are based on lesson observations and the priorities outlined in the school development plan, and are linked to appropriate in-service training. Lesson observations take place at least once a term for each teacher. This is more than is required, and takes considerable time. As the records of the observations are confidential, they cannot contribute to subject co-

ordinators' monitoring. The system for the induction of newly-qualified and newly-appointed teachers is satisfactory.

57. The school makes insufficient use of new technology. In particular, ICT is not used to record, track and analyse pupils' attainment. This is inefficient, and makes it hard for the school to track pupils' learning and monitor how well different groups of pupils are doing. The school is aware of this and has recently installed a suitable program, which has yet to be put into use.

58. The arrangements for financial management are satisfactory. The school's financial routines are understood and followed by staff. Grants made to the school by outside agencies are used appropriately, and the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been implemented. A high balance has been carried forward, partly because the school wishes to safeguard the number of teachers and classes in case the number on roll falls, and partly to finance some improvements to the site. The school has clearly set out procedures for ensuring that value for money is obtained for all major items of expenditure, for example when equipping the new computer suite. However, the school does not challenge itself sufficiently with regard to the quality of education it offers.

59. The school has sufficient teachers for the requirements of the National Curriculum, and they are deployed appropriately. As in most primary schools, teachers take on responsibility for subjects in which they are not specialists. However, they are enabled to attend training, to help them to carry out their responsibilities better. In response to an issue in the last inspection report, the learning support assistants have been deployed to literacy and numeracy lessons. Their support helps pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress, and is valued by both pupils and teachers.

60. The accommodation is satisfactory on balance, with some strengths but also some significant weaknesses. It includes a very good computer suite, good facilities for physical education, a specialist room for special educational needs teaching, a large hall, and extensive, pleasant grounds at the back of the school. However, the buildings are shabby and ill-kept, as was noted by the last inspection, although some classrooms have very good displays and provide a stimulating learning environment. The entrance to the school is uninviting. The junior library is sited inappropriately and is not suitable for pupils' use, and the infant library is unstimulating. The children in the reception class have no outside play area, which affects the provision of activities to promote their physical development.

61. Overall, resources are satisfactory, and similar to what was found by the last inspection. Resources are good for ICT, music and physical education. Weaknesses include the lack of large play apparatus for reception children, and the inadequate range of books in both libraries. This contributes to the weakness in pupils' reading skills, and limits the range of research activities that can be carried out.

62. On balance, the school's effectiveness and the value for money it provides are now satisfactory – as at the time of the last inspection. This judgement takes account of the following factors:

- the low attainment of the children on entry to the school;
- the recent improvements to the quality of education provided;
- pupils now achieving satisfactorily in the juniors, and doing better than previously in mathematics, science and ICT (though not yet in English, nor in the infants overall despite better teaching);

- pupils' results having returned to a similar level to that reported by the last inspection.

However, expenditure per pupil is above that of most schools nationally, and some weaknesses in leadership and management remain.

63. Too little has been accomplished since the school's last inspection, and so overall the school's improvement over the last three years is unsatisfactory. This is because of continuing weaknesses in leadership and management, although another factor in the slow pace of improvement was that staff changes led to a lack of experienced teachers to take on management responsibilities. For example, the headteacher had to manage the school without the support of a deputy headteacher for a time. The staffing situation is now much better. Staff share an awareness that a great deal still needs to be done, and are committed to this process. Their work during the last academic year has led to satisfactory improvement recently, and the school's capacity for sustaining this in the future is now satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. To raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve the teaching of English, and of literacy in other subjects [*paragraphs 27, 30, 61, 78-81, 84, 93, 95, 98, 105, 107*], by:
 - providing more opportunities for independent writing, and promoting higher standards of presentation in written work;
 - extending the planned reading of books other than those in the reading scheme;
 - planning for pupils' skills in speaking and listening to be developed systematically, including extending their vocabulary;
 - improving the resources in the school library, and making better use of it to support and extend pupils' reading development;
 - identifying links between English and other subjects, identifying the language skills to be practised and extended.
- (2) improve pupils' skills and confidence in learning independently [*paragraphs 13, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 82, 83, 87, 91-93, 99, 100, 102, 105, 112, 117, 118*], by
 - setting targets for their learning and discussing these with them, as is already done in a few classes;
 - making less use of copying, drawing and colouring, and encouraging pupils to think for themselves;
 - in marking, giving more guidance on what has been done well in written work and how to improve it in future, as is already done occasionally;
 - providing more opportunities for applying and extending the skills they develop in mathematics and ICT lessons, in lessons in other subjects.
- (3) improve the strategic management of the school [*paragraphs 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 84, 102, 106, 107*] by:
 - extending the school development plan, so that it covers the key areas of the school's work systematically and sets a clear overall direction;

- ensuring that governors and staff with management responsibilities monitor the implementation of the school development plan more rigorously, and evaluate the impact on pupils' learning and the standards they attain;
 - providing for all subjects to be led and managed effectively, including monitoring standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and how well the subject policies and curriculum plans are implemented.
- (4) improve the arrangements for assessing pupils' learning and the use of this information to help raise standards *[paragraphs 25, 42, 43, 57, 82- 84, 88, 89, 91, 98, 102, 106, 112]*, by:
- keeping records of pupils' attainment, and using them to track their learning from year to year – as is being introduced in some subjects;
 - analysing assessment information to check that different groups of pupils, including the higher-attaining pupils, are doing as well as they should.
- The school has already started to work on this area, with some success.
- (5) raise the rate of pupils' attendance, and their punctuality in the morning, by following up absence promptly and taking more steps to encourage regular attendance *[paragraphs 18, 39]*.
- (6) develop stronger links between the school and parents, to help parents give more support to their children's learning *[paragraphs 45, 47, 99]*, by
- providing them with more information about what is to be taught each term;
 - providing them with more guidance on how to read with their children, and support their written work at home;
 - setting more homework, especially for the older pupils;
 - encouraging parents of pupils with special educational needs to attend the review meetings.

65. The school and governing body may wish to include in the action plan the following other, minor issues for improvement:

- improving the individual education plans *[paragraph 31]*;
- improving the balance of time allocated to subjects *[paragraphs 29, 99, 115, 118]*;
- providing an outside play area and large play apparatus for children in the reception class *[paragraphs 60, 61, 73]*;
- meeting statutory requirements for the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents *[paragraph 52]*;
- improving the cleanliness and tidiness of the school site, and making it a more welcoming and stimulating learning environment *[paragraph 60]*.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	14	18	1	0	0
Percentage	0	11	38	48	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	149
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	37

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	59

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	8	19	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	13	13	16
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	59 (59)	52 (70)	78 (74)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	9	13	11
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	37(70)	59 (74)	48 (59)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

* The number of boys in Year 2 in 2000 was too low for their results to be included in the table.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	16	9	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	5
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	36 (56)	40 (44)	36 (56)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	5
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	40 (50)	41 (50)	38 (50)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

* The number of girls in Year 6 in 2000 was too low for their results to be included in the table.

Ethnic background of pupils

No of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Fixed period

Permanent

Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	135
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	22

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	172

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	372,740
Total expenditure	342,495
Expenditure per pupil	2,003
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,309
Balance carried forward to next year	51,554

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	154
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	36	11	0	7
My child is making good progress in school.	42	36	14	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	36	18	7	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	36	14	11	14
The teaching is good.	53	32	4	0	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	39	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	18	4	7	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	32	7	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	46	25	18	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	44	22	4	19	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	25	11	18	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	32	14	11	14

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

66. Children enter the reception class (the Foundation Stage) with standards that are well below average. Very few children have had any pre-school, play group experience. About a quarter of them come from traveller families. In some years, a quarter of the children are already on the special needs register. The school's assessments show that children start school with very low literacy skills. In each of the six areas of learning, only about a third of the children have attained the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. This means that standards on entry to Year 1 are well below average.

67. The teaching is good overall. The staff are knowledgeable, and work well as a team. They have good relationships with the children, and provide a supportive learning environment in which the children feel secure. Staff plan well for the children's education and welfare, including for traveller children and those with special educational needs. Both groups are fully integrated into the class. What the children are expected to learn in lessons is set out clearly, and the expectations of children's behaviour and achievement are appropriate. Overall, the children's learning is satisfactory. It is of a lower quality than the teaching because most children have difficulties in learning, and lack confidence. This is partly because of their lack of experience of playgroups or nursery provision. Nevertheless, the teaching leads to some children becoming more independent and confident by the end of the reception year, and the children's achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school is satisfactory in all the areas of learning.

68. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for these children. In particular, the teaching is better than was reported by the last inspection. The new curriculum for the foundation stage is well established, but there is still insufficient provision for safe outdoor play and access to large play equipment.

Personal, social and emotional development

69. The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Children's skills in this aspect meet the expectations for their age, and staff provide suitable opportunities for developing their social skills. Children have good relationships with each other, and they generally share activities well. They are encouraged to become independent and, where appropriate, make their own choices from the range of play and creative activities available. They are encouraged to take turns, such as in choosing which nursery rhymes to sing and which piece of fruit to select at the end of the morning. Some children, mainly the girls, are beginning to tidy away after themselves. Most children attempt to dress and undress independently for physical education, and are encouraged to do so, but the boys need more assistance with this than the girls. Personal hygiene is stressed as appropriate, such as washing hands after using the toilet and before eating snacks. Most children are able to concentrate and sit quietly during story time and assembly. The teacher has high expectations of behaviour, and children respond well to her calm, firm manner and good teaching. Consequently, their behaviour is good.

Communication, language and literacy

70. Teaching in this area is satisfactory, and children make sound progress. Few children speak confidently, and several children with special educational needs have problems in articulating even simple words. Girls talk to each other and play together co-operatively, but most boys confine conversation to making comments, such as

about their construction models or what they are doing at the sand table, without any expectation of a response. The boys are often noisy as they easily become excited during play. The teacher provides suitable opportunities for children to develop their speaking skills during group sessions on the carpet, such as saying what they think about the behaviour of the characters in the story of Goldilocks, and talking about shapes and about their favourite colours. Children show interest in books, and take a book home to read to their parents each night. The learning support assistant goes through the book with them the next day. Children handle books appropriately and tell the story from the pictures. They recognise that the print tells the story. Some are beginning to recognise letters and initial sounds. None of the children in the reception class can write their name independently yet, but by the end of the year almost all can do this and the higher-attaining children have progressed to reading and writing simple words. Role-play in the home corner is popular with both boys and girls.

Mathematical development

71. The teaching of mathematical development is sound, but the children's attainment is well below expectations by the end of the year, held back largely by the weaknesses in their language and literacy skills. A few children have learned to count to twenty by the start of Year 1, but the lower attainers have difficulty in recognising numbers to five. The mathematical activities cover an appropriate range of concepts. For example, children learn about the properties of shapes by counting the sides and corners of a square, using construction materials and doing matching activities, including jigsaws. Their mathematical language is extended, building on words they know such as 'big' and 'little', with careful attention to extending their vocabulary by introducing alternative words such as 'large' and 'small'. Children learn about capacity through guided play activities with the sand tray. Most understand 'empty' and 'full', though not concepts such as half-full.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

72. The teaching of this area is good. Opportunities are provided through the year for children to learn about the local environment, especially the natural world of trees and animals, to build up their knowledge and vocabulary. Children learn about history by looking at their own families. The children showed curiosity about cooking when playing in the home corner, as they selected items for "cooking". Some items were inappropriate, such as putting a bunch of grapes into the toy oven, illustrating the children's comparative lack of familiarity with some day-to-day activities. Using play dough, children are learning to roll and cut out. They used animal-shaped cutters to make "biscuits" and models of people. One child drew and cut out a very realistic snail, showing knowledge of its shape. The children are also learning to sort objects when putting away items after play activities. For example, the foods and cooking implements were separated correctly in the home corner, and the boys sorted the different construction materials into different types. No evidence seen of children using computers, but there was one in the classroom, turned on and ready for use as necessary.

Physical development

73. The teaching of physical development is good, but overall the provision for this area is only just satisfactory because of the lack of a safe outdoor play area in which the children can experience using large wheeled equipment. The teacher uses the school hall to very good effect in teaching the children about space, running and jumping, and balance. The children are becoming aware of space. For example, they

were learning to position themselves, with guidance, into an area where they could not touch anybody else. They practised walking along a painted line, holding out their arms for balance, in readiness for balancing along a bench. In the classroom, the children have access to a range of tools, including pens, brushes and paints, glue sticks and scissors. They make sound progress in learning to handle these tools properly.

Creative development

74. The teaching of creative development is good, but the children's attainment is limited by their language development. As few have had pre-school playgroup experience, they do not enter the school knowing a range of songs. However, they enjoyed singing and miming to nursery rhymes, led by the teacher. They sang quite tunefully, with a good sense of rhythm. They also sing happily with the infant pupils in assembly, copying their movements. They enjoy painting, drawing and modelling with play dough, although most start school with little experience in using these materials. Role-play is limited to home scenes at this early part of the school year, and the children's imaginations are relatively limited. Although their development is below what is expected by the end of the year, children in the reception class have experienced and enjoyed a good variety of creative activities.

ENGLISH

75. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 were in the lowest five per cent nationally in 2000, having fallen steadily for the last five years. In 2000, pupils did slightly better in reading than in writing, though results in both were very low. The results were also very low compared to similar schools. The small number of boys in this year group (fewer than ten) means that it is not possible to make a reliable judgement on whether boys' performance was significantly worse than girls, though overall they did less well.

76. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were very low in 2000, and lower than in any of the previous four years. The small number of girls means that it is not possible to make reliable comparisons between girls' and boys' performance. However, the school's analysis of these results and those for 2001 shows that the pupils generally did at least as well as would be expected based on their results in the tests at the end of Year 2, and almost all met their targets. This includes traveller pupils. The analysis shows that some low-attaining pupils made considerably greater gains than expected. Mostly, the pupils who did less well were those who had not attended school regularly. The results went up considerably in 2001 – the percentage gaining Level 4 or better almost doubled, and was similar to the 1998 results reported by the last inspection.

77. At the end of Years 2 and 6, the standards pupils attain are well below the national average in all aspects of English, as they are when pupils start Year 1. Even when this low starting point is taken into account, pupils' achievement during the infants and juniors is still unsatisfactory, despite some recent improvements.

78. Pupils of all ages have difficulties in expressing ideas orally. They are most confident in giving factual information, which they do briefly. They have narrow vocabularies, which limits their ability to express complex and subtle ideas orally and in writing. Most pupils of all ages speak in colloquial English, and tend to write in the same way. Pupils in Year 1 have difficulty listening attentively for any length of time, and tend to make irrelevant comments that showed they have not followed the teacher's line of discussion. By the end of the infants, most pupils answer relevantly but briefly, and have learned to take turns in class discussion. Pupils in the juniors

exchange ideas in pair work more successfully because they listen to each other with greater attentiveness and understanding, but even in Year 6 they generally answer teachers' questions briefly unless prompted to explain themselves further.

79. Standards in reading are lower than they should be for several reasons. Few pupils are enthusiastic readers who tackle a wide range of books independently, and the school pays too little attention to promoting independent reading. Teachers' records of what pupils have read are inadequate for monitoring pupils' progress in independent reading. Too much reliance is placed on the reading scheme, which pupils have to complete before they become 'free' readers. Only some high-attaining pupils have managed this by Year 5. Pupils of all ages have not read a suitably wide range of books, including poetry and non-fiction. This slows the development of pupils' skills and confidence. For example, only the oldest, high-attaining pupils are able to discuss their preferences for different authors and types of book.

80. Although pupils start Year 1 at a low level of attainment in writing, their skills are not built on systematically enough. By the end of Year 2, some pupils have learned to write a brief story with a beginning, middle and end. Average- and higher-attaining pupils use full stops, but have not learned other sentence punctuation. Lower-attaining pupils, who include those with special educational needs, struggle to write coherently, and a few are still at the stage of needing an adult to help them record simple ideas on paper. In the juniors, pupils learn to write in a wider range of styles, especially when they reach Years 5 and 6. However, few write at any length, partly because they have too few opportunities for this. Examples of good opportunities for writing independently provided during the last school year include the oldest pupils writing stories for pupils in Year 2, and presenting them as illustrated 'books'; and pupils in each class compiling an anthology of poems, during a focused week of creative and literary activities. The quality of this work is generally higher than the work done in most lessons, as shown by the sample of pupils' written work from last year.

81. Pupils' weaknesses in literacy affect their learning in other subjects. For example, pupils' understanding of what they read is affected by their lack of a wide vocabulary. Teachers rely too much on worksheets, which pupils complete with short answers rather than working out what they need to say independently, in English and other subjects. This slows pupils' progress in writing. Spelling is a weakness throughout the school, despite the regular learning of spellings for homework. Pupils of all ages also do handwriting practice regularly, and by the end of the infants most join their letters clearly and well in these practice sessions. However, only the higher-attaining pupils use this style at other times, and most pupils' written work is untidy, especially on worksheets. Too few links are made between work in English and pupils' reading and writing in other subjects, and so opportunities to consolidate language skills are missed.

82. The teaching of English observed during the inspection was satisfactory in both the infants and the juniors. The most effective teaching was observed in the juniors, where it was sometimes good. However, other evidence including the sample of pupils' written work showed that teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Teachers follow the national guidelines of the Literacy Strategy, but do not plan systematically for other elements of the National Curriculum for English, such as speaking and listening. Independent reading and writing are not taught well enough, as teachers rely too much on the reading scheme and worksheets that practise particular skills but do not expect pupils to think for themselves. This is insufficiently challenging, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils' work is checked regularly, but the marking gives pupils too little information on what they have done well and how to improve in future.

Too little use is made of homework, particularly for pupils in the juniors. These weaknesses contribute to pupils' achievement being unsatisfactory.

83. The teaching observed during the inspection showed a number of strengths. Teachers' lesson plans were usually very clear, and identified what pupils were expected to learn. The worksheets and other materials were often adapted to enable lower-attaining and special needs pupils to cope, though rarely provided equivalent challenge to the higher-attaining pupils. Traveller pupils were given encouragement and support that enabled them to progress as well as the other pupils. Teachers gave much praise and encouragement, and so pupils generally worked willingly. Their behaviour was managed firmly and successfully, though sometimes this took quite a lot of the teacher's time. Most support was usually given to pupils who were finding the work difficult and needed a lot of attention. This benefited the pupils with special educational needs and enabled them to make satisfactory progress, and contributed to the successful integration of traveller pupils. Higher-attaining pupils were often left to work quietly on their own for too long, and so sometimes did insufficient writing in the time available. Good questioning often involved all in the class, and generally pupils gained more knowledge from oral work than from reading and writing activities. Pupils generally found most difficulty in written work, and needed a lot of adult attention to reassure them that they were doing well. The pupils' lack of confidence and learning skills held back their progress in many lessons, and have contributed to their achievement being lower than it should be overall.

84. The improvement in English since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards are similar to those reported then. The requirements of the National Curriculum are covered and the National Literacy Strategy has been introduced successfully, but the school has not planned how to develop pupils' skills and experience in reading, writing, speaking and listening from year to year and in other subjects. The ICT suite has enabled teachers to introduce word processing activities, and this is now a satisfactory aspect of the provision for English. Teachers make insufficient use of the school library to extend pupils' reading and research skills, in English and other subjects. Successful examples of teachers setting individual targets for pupils during lessons were observed, helping pupils understand what to do to improve, but this is not general practice. Teachers have not assessed pupils' learning regularly and kept informative records from which to plan. As was noted by the last inspection, a portfolio of exemplar work has not been compiled, to help teachers see how to improve the standard of pupils' reading and writing from year to year. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory, although some initiatives have successfully broadened pupils' experience in English and recent monitoring identified a need for dictionaries, which have been bought.

MATHEMATICS

85. Results in mathematics in the tests at the end of Year 2 were well below the national average in 2000. The results were very low compared to those for similar schools. The trend in results from 1998 to 2000 is of an improvement. Indications are that the 2001 results have continued this trend.

86. At the end of Year 6, the results in the tests in 2000 were very low compared to the national average and to the average for similar schools. The results had risen until 1998, after which they fell sharply. However, the results in 2001 were similar to those for 1998 – when they were average compared to the national results. In both 2000 and 2001, almost all the pupils who had attended school regularly reached their targets in mathematics, and some exceeded it. This includes pupils from travelling families. The

number of boys and girls has been too low to enable valid comparisons of their results to be made.

87. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have learned to do simple addition and subtraction. Work seen in their books showed that they are also learning the value of digits in different columns, are beginning to understand the properties of different shapes and have begun to read information from simple tables. This is lower than the standard expected of pupils of this age, and overall their attainment is well below national expectations. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, when their attainment on entry to Year 1 is taken into account. For example, some pupils in Year 1 counted to twenty confidently and wrote the numbers in words, but many had difficulties with both tasks. Pupils cover an appropriate range of mathematical activities in the infants, and make satisfactory gains in their understanding and skills. There is, however, an over-dependence on commercially-produced worksheets, which limits pupils' opportunities to think for themselves. Pupils are also given too few opportunities to express their ideas orally.

88. The evidence of pupils' written work showed that in 2001 standards were below national expectations at the end of Year 6. Standards are higher than the test results for 2000 because of recent improvements in the provision for mathematics, and because of differences in the year groups. Pupils' achievement in the juniors is now good, with a strength in their learning in the upper juniors. Pupils make good gains in manipulating numbers confidently. For example, Year 3 pupils use number bonds to add and subtract two digit numbers. Year 4 pupils were seen extending this to being able to count in multiples of ten, up to ten thousand. By Year 5, pupils work in millions. In Year 6, pupils are able to explain the difference between proportion and ratio, and to use their knowledge to solve mathematical problems. The higher-attaining pupils manipulate numbers confidently, identify two- and three-dimensional shapes correctly, and display their own data in the form of charts and graphs. However, pupils in the juniors are not given enough opportunities to discuss the strategies they use when carrying out calculations. This contributes to higher-attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged, and to pupils being less successful in solving problems than in the other areas of the mathematics curriculum. Pupils' presentation of their written work in mathematics is satisfactory overall, and better in the juniors than the infants.

89. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs, have a good attitude to their work in mathematics, and their behaviour is also good. They co-operate well, take their work seriously and are keen to succeed.

90. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching and learning are good in the juniors, and satisfactory in the infants. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, and is one of the reasons pupils are achieving well in the juniors. A strength in most lessons was that the teachers had planned their lesson well, and the activities were well sequenced. Pupils were reminded of the work they had covered previously, which helped them to improve their knowledge and become more confident in practising mathematical skills. Teachers' questioning was good as it helped pupils to sort out their ideas and to understand the concept being taught. In several lessons, mistakes were used as learning points and pupils were given time to think about their answers before having to speak. Relationships are good. Staff are supportive of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, enabling them to make satisfactory progress in the infants and good progress in the juniors.

91. Several weaknesses in teaching and learning remain. ICT is not used often enough as a tool to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. Sometimes, the higher-attaining pupils are not given enough responsibility for their own learning, which

holds back their progress in lessons. The quality of marking is unsatisfactory overall. Whilst teachers' comments are positive, they are too brief and do not give pupils enough advice on how to improve their work. Pupils do not have targets for improvement, and older pupils are given few opportunities to assess their own work. Pupils' weak learning skills and limited ability to express themselves orally lead to them having difficulties in some aspects of mathematics, particularly solving number problems. These weaknesses contribute to pupils having too little insight into how well they are doing in mathematics and how to improve further.

92. Pupils are given some opportunities to use the skills they have learned in mathematics in other subjects. For example, during a Year 1 design and technology lesson, pupils measured lengths of tube to make a set of pan pipes. In a religious education lesson, Year 4 pupils looked at the number of people in different groups, to help them understand the groups in which the people sat at the feeding of the five thousand. During science, pupils in Year 5 had to calculate money when deciding what food to buy to a value of £5. However, numeracy activities are not incorporated sufficiently into teachers' planning for other subjects, which results in opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills and mathematical understanding being missed.

93. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory improvement in mathematics as a result of good leadership and management. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented successfully. This has helped to improve teaching and learning, and so contributed to the rising standards, especially in the juniors. However, weaknesses remain in monitoring of teaching and the use of ICT in mathematics. Pupils' language and learning difficulties continue to limit how well they do.

SCIENCE

94. In 2000, teacher assessments showed pupils' attainment to be well below average at the end of Year 2. The results of the national assessments at the end of Year 6 were also well below average, compared with schools nationally and with similar schools. Traveller pupils who had attended school regularly did as well as other pupils in 2000. The trend in the school's results since 1998 was of a fall, whereas the national trend rose. There was no pattern of difference in the results of boys and girls, although numbers have been too low to make reliable comparisons. In 2001, the Year 6 results improved significantly. The percentage of pupils who gained Level 4 or higher was twice that of 2000, and higher than in any previous year. More higher-attaining pupils gained Level 5.

95. The standard attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 is well below average. Pupils' attainment is affected by their difficulties in reading and writing. However, their achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils make sound gains in their knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 2 pupils learned about various mini-beasts and their habitats through carrying out an investigation into what small creatures could be found in the school grounds, but they had difficulty in recording the information correctly on their worksheets.

96. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. They are higher than the test results for 2000 because recent improvements to the curriculum and teaching have led to junior pupils' achievement being good overall. Year 5 pupils showed good understanding of healthy diet when they chose ingredients for a healthy meal from a picture of a supermarket display. They used their numeracy skills well to choose ingredients within a given budget. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are better than their written work. For example, Year 6 pupils worked well collaboratively to explore how light travels, and succeeded in using mirrors to reflect light, to overcome

obstacles. They drew and labelled simple diagrams to illustrate how light travels, but their written explanations were minimal.

97. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. Most lessons are planned well, with clear aims and sufficient attention to the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and traveller pupils are usually well supported, and so make good progress. In the most successful lessons, which were observed in Years 5 and 6, the work included more demanding activities for higher-attaining pupils, and pupils' learning was monitored and assessed carefully. Classroom assistants gave pupils with weak literacy skills good support, particularly when they needed to read or to record information. The pace of these lessons was fast, with time limits for pupils' independent work, and a variety of resources was used well to make the lesson interesting. As a result, the pupils joined in with enthusiasm, and made good gains in their knowledge and understanding.

98. Throughout the school, teachers make much use of worksheets. These are mostly supportive of pupils' scientific learning, enabling them to clarify their thoughts and organise their ideas. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, a worksheet enabled pupils to record their observations on magnetic properties. However, the lack of opportunities for independent writing limits pupils' overall attainment, and does not help pupils to overcome their difficulties in literacy. The older pupils do not do enough extended scientific writing, and higher-attaining pupils of all ages are not challenged enough to achieve high standards in their written work.

99. Some science lessons are too long. Pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration, despite the good pace and variety of teaching strategies employed. When the aims of the lesson were not well matched to the needs of the pupils, they were inattentive and learned little. Teachers' marking of written work is too variable in quality. Some marking provides valuable comments that help pupils' scientific development, but most simply acknowledges that the work has been done. Teachers provide the older pupils with too few opportunities to extend their science work at home.

100. The improvement in science since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, and has been good in the last year. Science is now led and managed well, as a result of which the standards pupils attain are improving. A good scheme of work based on national guidelines has been introduced for the juniors, improving the effectiveness of the teaching of these pupils. The school plans to extend this to the infants. Teachers make insufficient use of ICT within the science curriculum. A formal half-termly assessment of pupils' work has recently been introduced. The information is to be used to track pupils' progress from year to year as well as to help teachers plan work that challenges all in the class. A portfolio with examples of pupils' work is being compiled, with the aim of helping teachers to assess the standard of work pupils produce. A start has been made on monitoring science teaching. The resources are good, and science displays around the school are both attractive and stimulating.

In the foundation subjects reported on below, judgements are based on the evidence of pupils' previously-completed work, discussions with teachers and scrutiny of their planning and other documentation, and on talking to some pupils. Lessons were seen in some of these subjects. Where the evidence is sufficient, overall judgements on standards, pupils' achievement, teaching and learning have been made. Elsewhere, inspectors have evaluated the quality of what was observed without making overall judgements.

ART AND DESIGN

101. Two art lessons were observed, and a few examples of pupils' work from the last school year were seen. This evidence indicates that standards are below what is expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6, and that pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. A suitably wide variety of media has been used for two-dimensional work, including paint, pastels, and tissue paper for collages, and some classes have used clay to make three-dimensional objects such as masks. The work of several artists has been studied. Sketchbooks have not been used regularly in the juniors. Pupils' skills have not been developed systematically. For example, Year 6 pupils did not have the skills of observation needed to sketch good faces. They needed much guidance, such as on how to get the proportions right. The strengths in the teaching enabled the class to make good progress in this lesson, despite their uncertainty and lack of confidence, and some pupils' inattentiveness. In contrast, Year 2 pupils settled with interest to examining and drawing leaves and other plant materials collected from the school grounds. They were very interested in the teacher's demonstration of techniques, and their drawings improved through practice. In both lessons, useful links were made to pupils' learning in science.

102. The school does not have a teacher with expertise in art, to lead and manage the subject. It is being looked after by the headteacher, as a temporary measure. The school has introduced the use of nationally-produced units of work, but has not provided supporting guidance to help teachers teach art knowledge and skills systematically. A portfolio of work to exemplify the work done by each year group has not been collated, and teachers have no information on the quality of pupils' work in previous years. Insufficient use has been made of ICT within art. Improvement since the last inspection in this subject is unsatisfactory as in most respects the situation is the same as reported then.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. Two lessons were observed during the inspection, and a small amount of work completed in the last school year was seen. The evidence indicated that standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with what is expected nationally and that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. An appropriate range of work is covered, developing a variety of designing and making skills. For instance, pupils in Year 1 had made pan pipes, for which they had measured accurately and used hacksaws to cut various lengths of plastic tubing and dowelling. Year 2 had made wishing wells with winding gear mechanisms, and Year 6 pupils had planned and made model Anderson shelters, using mitre joints. They had also designed and made a fairground ride powered by electricity, for which they won an award. Year 5 pupils were observed investigating biscuits, in preparation for designing and making their own. They showed sound skills in analysing the shape and texture of sample biscuits. By the end of the lesson, all in the class had produced at least four outlines of types of biscuit, with illustrations, and higher-attaining pupils had completed six different outlines.

104. As at the time of the last inspection, a thriving after-school club gives Year 6 pupils a good opportunity to develop their designing and construction skills. It is led by the headteacher, who also co-ordinates the subject satisfactorily and gives enthusiastic leadership in supporting class teachers' work. Resources are good. The strengths identified by the last inspection have been maintained. Overall, improvement since then is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

105. The evidence of pupils' written work from the last school year, other documentation and the one lesson observed indicated that standards in geography are

well below what is expected at the end of Years 2 and 6, and that pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils have completed too little written work. Pupils in the infants have done some work on places, such as comparing Darent and Hastings, and have recorded a little information. The best work involved drawing buildings one might find at the seaside and writing their own label or comment on each, although the quality of the writing and drawing was low. Other work involved colouring in worksheets, usually untidily and often incompletely. This is also the case for the juniors. Pupils in the juniors have done too little written work, most of which involved recording information, such as labelling major cities on a map of the British Isles or copying notes such as on the water cycle. Pupils of all levels of attainment have done the same work, though the pupils with special educational needs had not completed each task. In the lesson observed, Year 5 pupils had weak knowledge of geographical facts (they had difficulty naming the countries of the United Kingdom) and vocabulary (they were unsure of the difference between a map and an atlas). Their weaknesses in literacy and vocabulary held back their learning, as did many pupils' lack of self-control in discussion. However, the well-sequenced activities and enthusiasm of the teacher motivated them, their behaviour was managed firmly and fairly, and so they enjoyed the lesson and made satisfactory gains in their knowledge about rivers.

106. No teacher has responsibility for leading and managing geography, and so the weaknesses that were identified by the last inspection remain. The improvement since then is unsatisfactory. Although the curriculum has benefited by the introduction of nationally-produced units of work for each year group, these have not been adapted to meet the needs of the pupils – for example by identifying key vocabulary and skills to be taught each year. Very little use has been made of ICT within the geography work covered, and pupils have too few opportunities for independent writing. Records of how well pupils have done in geography have not been maintained.

HISTORY

107. The evidence of pupils' work from the last school year and other documentation indicated that standards are well below what is expected at the end of Years 2 and 6, and that pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Most teachers have relied too much on worksheets and activities that involve recording information. Pupils have not done enough research and writing in their own words. Pupils of all levels of attainment and literacy skills have recorded similar information, and some of the worksheets used by the younger pupils contain text of too high a level of reading difficulty. Pupils in Year 2 have done little written work, which includes some simple drawings with colouring-in that has been done very unevenly. Pupils in Year 3 have recorded a reasonable amount of information on the Vikings and Romans, some of which has been copied out, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have moved on to answering questions that require interpretation of historical evidence. The work for these pupils has been more challenging, with much less use of worksheets. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 have had more opportunity to think for themselves, such as identifying differences in transport between Victorian times and the present.

108. History has not been led and managed satisfactorily. However, the new subject co-ordinator has appropriate ideas on how to develop teaching and learning, including by collecting more historical artefacts. Standards in history are lower than reported by the last inspection, and the weaknesses in management that were identified then remain. Too little use is made of ICT within this subject. Overall, the improvement in history is unsatisfactory, although the introduction of nationally-produced units of work has been beneficial in improving the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

109. Standards in ICT are below what is expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6 because pupils have not covered all the elements of the ICT curriculum, and computers are not used frequently enough in other subjects. However, standards have risen considerably since the new computer suite was installed during the last school year, enabling teachers to introduce work that covers the various areas of the National Curriculum. As a result, Year 6 pupils' attainment is in line with what is expected for their age in the area of using computers for communicating information. They have learned how to use a word processing package to modify text and add graphics, to present it attractively. They have used the Internet to carry out research into subjects such as animals and the earth, sun and moon. They save, retrieve and print their work confidently, and are able to explain different ways of executing a task. For example, they know that either an icon or the file menu can be used to give a 'print' command. They are inexperienced in other areas, including measurement and computer control. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is also broadly at the expected level in using computers for recording and presenting information. These pupils use the keyboard and mouse confidently, and save and retrieve their work. They recognise vocabulary associated with computers, although they are not confident in using it.

110. Pupils' achievement has improved and is now satisfactory, when account is taken of the low level of knowledge and skills they used to have. For example, pupils in Year 3 learned how to use capital letters and change the size and style of a font, and were introduced to using the Internet and sending emails. Year 4 pupils were seen learning to use Logo to draw a square by giving the necessary instructions. Pupils in Year 4 have learned to input data into a simple spreadsheet program, and to create bar charts to display the information. Topics that have not yet been covered sufficiently include how to use a computer for measuring and control activities, and how to interrogate a database. ICT has not been used for composing music. Most pupils' experience in computer art is limited to selecting and manipulating clip art. Pupils also have too little understanding of how computers are used outside school and how this might develop in the future.

111. The teaching and learning seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. Overall, both were good. Lesson activities had been planned well, identifying the skills to be taught. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs, enjoyed their work and tried hard. They co-operated well when working in pairs on the computer. Teachers and learning support assistants supported their learning well. This enabled pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress even when the tasks were difficult for them. Strengths in the very good teaching included the clarity of the instructions and explanations given to pupils, and the demanding work. The pace of these lessons was fast. A great deal of knowledge was imparted in a short time, which created a very positive learning atmosphere as the class enjoyed the challenge and competed to do well. The Year 5 class learned to create, move and colour shapes to draw an object, which many did skilfully. The Year 6 class worked on making an animated story, successfully modifying text, importing graphics and creating hyperlinks between pages. The last part of these lessons included a review of pupils' work, which reinforced their learning and gave them pride in their achievement.

112. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory improvement in ICT overall. The improvement during the last school year has been good as a result of good leadership and management. The school is now very well equipped for teaching ICT. The new computer suite is a very good resource – a great deal of care and attention to detail was taken in designing and equipping the room. Recent training in

the use of ICT has improved the teachers' expertise, and they are now passing on their enthusiasm to the pupils. The curriculum is now based on nationally-produced units of work which cover all that is required. Arrangements for assessing pupils' learning regularly and systematically have recently been introduced, with the intention of tracking pupils' knowledge and skills from year to year so that the teaching can be adapted to their needs. Extending the use of ICT in other subjects remains an area to be tackled.

MUSIC

113. Due to timetabling constraints, only one lesson was seen during the inspection. As a result, there was insufficient evidence to form a judgement on standards or pupils' achievement in music. However, pupils sang enthusiastically and well in assemblies, and the school has a thriving choir. In the lesson observed, Year 5 pupils learned that percussion instruments can make a wide range of sounds, and were able to clap a rhythm correctly. The knowledge and understanding were lower than is expected for their age, and their learning was slowed for a while because of the inattentive behaviour of many in the class.

114. There was insufficient evidence to evaluate the improvement in music since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Too little time is given to improving and monitoring the provision for music because the co-ordinator has other major whole-school responsibilities, although staff are given helpful advice and support.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. The evidence indicates that pupils attain standards similar to those expected for their ages at the end of Years 2 and 6, and that their achievement is satisfactory. Three lessons were seen during the inspection, one of which was mostly used to introduce Year 3 pupils to the use of the gym. The teachers had clear aims for pupils' learning, which they shared with the class at the start of each lesson. The pupils pursued the aims conscientiously, and with enjoyment. However, the lessons were timetabled for an hour, which was too long for most pupils to sustain their concentration and interest. This was especially true for the younger pupils, and led to some inappropriate behaviour towards the end of their lesson. In all three lessons, pupils were enthusiastic. In a lesson that introduced them to dance, pupils in Year 2 investigated large and small movements, with the aim of developing their awareness of space. They worked well, and in pairs refined their ideas on how to show feelings through their movements. Pupils in Year 5 showed awareness of how to move with control and to balance on various parts of the body.

116. The subject is well led and managed, and its improvement since the last inspection is good. The policy has been updated and a scheme of work has been compiled, based on national guidelines but adapted to the needs of the school. Resources are good, and include a very well equipped gym and playing fields. A variety of after-school sports clubs for boys and girls broadens their opportunities to develop their skills and play competitive games, and pupils can participate in gym awards. The school now meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum as it has introduced swimming lessons for Years 5 and 6. A voluntary contribution is requested, to help the school cover the costs of taking pupils to the local pool, but all who wish to are allowed to go. At their parents' wish, several pupils, mainly travellers, do not go swimming.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

117. Three lessons were observed, and pupils' written work and other documentation were scrutinised. This evidence was insufficient to determine pupils' achievement and the standards attained at the end of Years 2 and 6, although it indicated that standards are below the level expected by the local Agreed Syllabus. This has two strands: learning *about* religion and learning *from* religion. Pupils cover the world's major religions, their festivals, holy books and different ways of life. However, most written work relates to learning about religion, with insufficient emphasis on learning from it. Too much written work has involved copying information. In all the lessons observed, teachers promoted pupils' moral and social education well, when discussing the topic studied. For example, Year 4 pupils being introduced to Sikhism were strongly encouraged to help others, and to apply to their own lives the moral of a Sikh story they had read. Some boys, most of whom had special educational needs and many of whom were from traveller families, were inattentive and attention-seeking. The teacher managed them firmly and well, ensuring that the lesson ended calmly with a prayer, although the learning of the whole class was slowed by the interruptions.

118. Overall, the improvement in religious education since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Too little time is allocated each week for religious education, which affects standards and pupils' achievement. For example, teachers are unable to give pupils opportunities to write independently and at sufficient length. Too little use is made of ICT. The curriculum continues to be enriched by a week in which a religious education theme is followed, and by visits to a Sikh temple and Christian church. The subject now has good resources, including a variety of artefacts. It is managed satisfactorily in that teachers are given good support and advice, but the arrangements are unsatisfactory for monitoring standards and teaching, and for assessing pupils' learning.

