



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

INSPECTION REPORT

SHERWIN KNIGHT INFANT SCHOOL

Strood, Kent

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118457

Headteacher: Mrs Lorna Walter

Reporting inspector: Mr Selwyn Ward
9271

Dates of inspection: 5-8 March 2001

Inspection number: 211604

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M. Griffin

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9736	John Brasier	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2343	Jacque Grieve	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
23288	Marianne Harris	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art Music	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? Special educational needs
20948	John Linstead	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Information and communications technology Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities? Equal opportunities
17852	Lawrence Moscrop	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

With 288 pupils, including 52 who are currently part-time in the nursery, Sherwin Knight is a very large infant school. There are similar numbers of girls and boys. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and none learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is average and none currently have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Overall, children are of below average attainment when they start school, particularly in speech and language.

The inspection of the school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Standards have significantly improved since the last inspection. Very effective leadership and management of the school have resulted in very substantial improvements in teaching so that children make good progress throughout the school. Sherwin Knight Infants is now a very effective school which provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The teaching is good, so that children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- The school is very well led and managed.
- The *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies* have been used effectively in raising standards.
- The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.
- Pupils behave very well, get on very well with one another and have a very positive attitude to learning.
- There are good procedures for looking after pupils' welfare.
- The school works closely with parents and keeps them very well informed about their children's progress.

What could be improved

- Pupils are not doing as well as they should be in information and communications technology.
- Lessons in different classes in the same year group do not always cover subjects in similar depth.
- The school buildings are poor and do not offer appropriate facilities for infant children.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Sherwin Knight Infants was last inspected two years ago when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. These particularly related to the high proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching and the school's ineffective management which were contributing to well below average attainment in English, mathematics and science. Since that time, the school has improved very considerably so that the serious weaknesses have now been remedied. A new headteacher has been appointed who has worked with teachers, parents and pupils to raise standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Leadership and management are now very effective and teaching is now good overall, with much that is very good. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The school has set itself challenging targets to further raise standards and staff are committed to continue this improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on average point scores in the national tests.

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

Schools are categorised as similar according to the number of children known to be eligible for free school meals.

The information above shows that standards achieved in each of the tests in 2000 were below the national average. They were also below the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics and well below in writing. Detailed analysis of the results do however show a strong improving trend over the past three years, with a rate of improvement over this period much better than achieved nationally, and a narrowing gap between the performance of boys and girls, although girls are still doing a little better than boys in writing and mathematics. The school has set challenging targets for further improvement in test results and pupils' work seen in reading, writing and mathematics during the inspection showed evidence that standards have continued to improve since last year's tests. Work seen was judged to be in line with national expectations by the age of seven, with pupils making good progress and achieving well for their abilities. In other subjects, standards are in line with national expectations with the exception of information and communications technology. Although standards have improved in this subject since the last inspection, pupils are still not doing as well as they should be.

When children enter the *Foundation Stage*, their attainment is generally below that expected for their ages. They make good progress during their time in the nursery and reception classes and achieve well, so that standards seen during the inspection indicated that children were likely to be broadly in line with expected standards by the time they enter *Key Stage 1*.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very keen to work hard and learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Consistently very good, both in lessons and around the school. There have been no exclusions over the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils get on well with each other and with adults. They are considerate, help each other and show remarkable maturity for their age.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and most children arrive at school on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 100% of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 68% of the lessons, and very good in 14%. The school has adopted and follows the *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies* and the teaching of English is good, with mathematics teaching being very good overall.

Teachers have created a really exciting and stimulating environment which motivates pupils to learn. The most effective teaching is well planned to ensure that time is well used and that children are able to build on what they have previously learned. Pupils know what it is they are expected to learn and teachers' clear instructions help to ensure that children settle quickly to the tasks set them. Teachers know and manage pupils well and organise lessons so that children are fully involved. They build very effectively on children's enthusiasm for learning by helping pupils develop the skills they need to take responsibility for their own learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations, set work which is appropriately challenging for pupils of different abilities and get a lot done. Teaching assistants are very well used and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Where teaching, although satisfactory, is relatively less effective, teachers are not sufficiently clear about what they expect children to achieve. In some lessons, there is too much teacher talk and children spend too long on the carpet as passive listeners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<i>National Curriculum</i> and religious education requirements are met and the curriculum for the <i>Foundation Stage</i> meets legal requirements. The <i>National Literacy</i> and <i>Numeracy Strategies</i> are making an effective contribution to raising standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils are well taught and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, and the school provides very well for pupils' personal development through <i>Circle Time</i> and through individual target-setting for every child.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All children are looked after well, both throughout the school day and at break and lunchtimes. Assessment information is very thorough and is used well to raise attainment.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school works closely with parents and keeps them very well informed about their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team provide very clear educational direction and are committed to raising standards and providing the best education for the children. Staff with subject management and other responsibilities fulfil their roles well but not all have had the opportunity to be involved in evaluating colleagues' teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors satisfactorily fulfil their responsibilities and are supportive of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Teaching and learning are monitored well by the headteacher and senior staff and this has contributed to the significant improvements in teaching and the good progress pupils make. The school applies the principles of " <i>best value</i> " to evaluate for itself what it does well and what it might do to improve.
The strategic use of resources	School budgeting is linked well to a clear school improvement plan which targets resources towards raising standards and ensuring improvement.

The school is well staffed with teachers and support staff. Cover for long-term staff absence has however meant that the teacher appointed as special needs co-ordinator and to provide some non-teaching time to other teachers with subject management responsibilities has had to work as a class teacher. There are adequate books and resources for all subjects, although the number of computers is below average. The school manages very well with accommodation that is poor. There are no permanent buildings, so that although there is an adequate number of classrooms, these are located in rather dilapidated huts, originally intended as temporary buildings but which are now more than 60 years old. Children have to go outside in order to move to assemblies or physical education lessons and this can be disruptive, particularly in inclement weather. There are adequate playing fields and playground areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school and are well behaved• The teaching is good• Children make good progress and this is well reported• The school is approachable and works closely with parents• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best• Children are helped to become mature and responsible• The school is well led and managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children are not given the right amount of homework• There are not enough extracurricular activities

Inspectors agree with the parents' favourable views of the school. Inspectors judged that homework seen during the inspection was appropriate and was used well. Some extracurricular activities are offered to children during the lunch break. Inspectors judged these to be in line with those seen in other infant schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Throughout this report, references to *Key Stage 1* relate to Years 1 and 2, when pupils are aged 5 to 7 years. Children in the nursery and in the reception year, who enter the school aged under five, are considered to be in the *Foundation Stage*. Schools are compared as against the national average, as well as against "*similar schools*". Schools are grouped as similar according to the proportion of children attending who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
2. Children's attainment on entry to the school is generally below that expected for their ages. Throughout both the *Foundation Stage* and *Key Stage 1*, pupils make good progress and achieve well so that standards seen during the inspection are broadly in line with expectations when the children enter *Key Stage 1*. In the national Standard Assessment Tests for seven-year-olds in English in 2000, pupils' results were below those expected nationally in reading and writing, and below those of similar schools in reading. Standards in writing were well below those of similar schools. However in reading, more pupils achieved the higher level than found nationally. Girls do better than boys in writing, and by a wider margin than seen nationally, but the gap has narrowed over the past three years. From lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards in all aspects of English were found to be in line with those expected nationally, indicating a continuing trend of improvement over the last few years.
3. In the national tests for seven-year-olds in mathematics in 2000, results were below those expected nationally, and below those of similar schools. Lessons and work seen during the inspection indicated that pupils are now reaching the expected standard in all aspects of mathematics. The previous gap between the attainment of boys and girls, where girls were doing better at mathematics, is now narrowing, and this is an improvement. Pupils' understanding of number is now of an above average standard.
4. There are no national tests for science at *Key Stage 1*, but teacher assessments show that pupils achieve standards that are in line with those expected for their age. More than a third of the children attain at a level which is higher than the expected standard. This proportion is well above the national average. Analysis of the work seen during the inspection indicates that most pupils are likely to attain the expected level by the end of the key stage. In all other subjects, pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected for their ages, except in information and communication technology, where standards are below those expected. Standards in singing are high, as are some aspects of religious education.
5. The number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, although there are no pupils with a statement of need. Many of the pupils with special educational needs have speech and language difficulties and a few have been identified as having behavioural problems. They make good progress throughout the school and achieve well for their ability.
6. Results in the national tests have risen since the last inspection and at a faster rate than seen nationally. Pupils are now achieving well and standards have continued to improve since last year's tests. This is very good improvement. The school has set itself challenging but achievable targets to further raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and the strong staff commitment to raising pupils' attainment in these and other subjects indicates that the school is on track to continue to improve.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils are enthusiastic, work hard and enjoy coming to school. They are keen to answer questions and be involved in activities, so that, for example, when teachers ask children to volunteer answers, there is always a very high level of participation. Just occasionally, children are so keen to take part that they put their hands up to volunteer to answer a teacher's question before they have actually thought of the answer. All pupils show extremely positive attitudes to school and to learning. They respond very well to the school's encouragement of even the youngest to take some responsibility for their own learning, as, for example, when nursery children choose their own activities and discuss with the teacher what they have learnt and

how well they think they are doing. As a result, children become self-motivated and develop a high level of independence. Pupils are considerate, help each other and work very well together. They settle quickly and without fuss to tasks they are set in class and pupils of all abilities are able to work with sustained concentration.

8. The school has maintained and built on the positive attitudes and behaviour seen of pupils in the last inspection. Children all understand and appreciate the school's *Golden Rules* and behaviour is consistently very good, both around the school and in lessons. In one class, where a child with special educational needs for behavioural difficulties was being allowed some latitude by the teacher to give them a chance to settle, the other children showed remarkable maturity in getting on with their work and none allowed themselves to be distracted for even a moment. There was no evidence of any bullying seen during the inspection, and parents report that bullying is rare and they are confident that where it is reported, it is dealt with effectively. There have been no exclusions over the past year.
9. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative and to take on responsibility. They are trusted around the school and respond very well to that trust. In the weekly *Golden Time* where children are able to choose from a menu of fun activities at the end of the week, older pupils work and play alongside younger ones and spontaneously offer help when it is needed. Children readily take on litter duty on a class rota basis as '*Golden Hands*' and in an outdoor class assembly, where a teacher seemed to be carelessly dropping litter in order to make a point, children were generally shocked and politely challenged this perceived infringement. The school's timetabled *Plan, Do, Review* sessions ensure that from their start in the nursery, children are able to take part in planning and assessing their own work. Reading and other homework is set, including in the nursery, and pupils are encouraged to do additional work of their own at home; with work often shown to the class and celebrated during morning registration. Many parents agreed, and the inspection confirms, that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.
10. Attendance is satisfactory. Although it is a little below the national average, this national comparison is with primary schools to the age of eleven rather than with infant schools. Punctuality is good with most pupils arriving at school on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. Part of the inspection focus was on literacy and numeracy, so that priority was given to observing the teaching of English and mathematics. All classes were seen being taught these subjects. In most cases inspectors were able to observe full lessons and, in judging teaching, inspectors sought evidence that pupils were learning and making progress.
12. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 100% of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 68% of the lessons, with 14% of lessons being very good. Examples of good teaching were seen consistently across the school, with at least one good lesson seen from every teacher. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection where teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory overall and was poor in a third of classes. The school has taken effective steps to improve the quality of teaching and, as a result, standards are now rising faster than seen nationally.
13. In the *Foundation Stage*, teaching is good overall, with children making good progress in their learning. Much emphasis is put on children becoming interested and motivated to learn, and children are given much responsibility for helping to plan and carry out their own work. There is good teaching of basic number and writing skills so that the children are well prepared to enter *Key Stage 1*.
14. In *Key Stage 1*, teaching in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good, with literacy and numeracy skills being taught effectively. The literacy and numeracy strategies are firmly established within the school with appropriate emphasis placed on the teaching of basic skills. Literacy is encouraged across the curriculum and was seen, for example, in history, where pupils had written accounts of George Stephenson and his invention *The Rocket*. Numeracy skills are similarly seen in other subjects and during other activities. For example, during morning registration, pupils are frequently expected to accurately calculate how many children are present by subtracting the number absent from the number of pupils in the class.

15. Inspectors only make overall judgements on the quality of teaching in other subjects in *Key Stage 1* where a sufficient number of lessons were seen in that subject. Teaching is good in religious education. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expect the pupils to achieve much in lessons. The teaching of singing is good, as effective use is made of the school's music specialist. Pupils progressed well, learning to sing simple appropriate songs in the *Foundation Stage* and moving on to more complicated two-part singing by the end of *Key Stage 1*. In physical education, teaching is satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, particularly when teaching assistants are used to support pupils effectively. Teachers planning shows that work is well matched to pupils needs.
16. In the most effective lessons, classes were managed well and pupils were fully involved in their own learning. The practice of *Plan, Do, Review* is particularly effective throughout the school in helping pupils to become independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning. In all lessons, teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and are able to motivate the pupils to research at home and share their findings with the rest of the class. A good example of this was an art lesson, where pupils were learning about William Morris and many had learnt a lot from looking on the internet at home. All staff form good relationships with the pupils and set high expectations for learning and behaviour. Resources are well used to help pupils to make good progress. The exception to this is in information and communications technology where there are insufficient computers for teaching to be really effective.
17. Most lessons were well paced with activities that were well matched to pupils' abilities and prior learning. Lessons are planned using effective regular assessments which ensure that pupils make good progress and learning gains. Teachers' marking is used effectively for assessing how well children are doing, although it is better in some classes than others. In the best examples, a clear note was made of the skills developed and guidance was given for further improvement. Even during the lunch break when children are at play, the school provides them with good learning opportunities. Midday supervisors organise a range of playground activities for children which help them to learn.
18. Within this very positive picture of teaching, there are very few significant weaknesses. Some lessons, although satisfactory, were too long and pupils were kept sitting on the carpet for inappropriate lengths of time. This caused them to become restless and on occasion to lose interest. Although teachers in the same year group plan together to ensure that pupils have equal access to the curriculum, there are times when lessons were not explored in the same depth and this led to inequalities across some classes.
19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers take responsibility for writing targets and are able to plan for each child in their class, reminding them of their goals where appropriate. There is very little withdrawal of pupils from lessons as support is effectively targeted in class. Good teaching assistants know the pupils well and are well deployed to support pupils with special educational needs in class so that they make good progress in their learning.

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

20. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered by the school are good. Statutory requirements are met, including the teaching of religious education and the provision of a daily collective act of worship. The implementation and use of the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* has proved effective in raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' lesson plans have also improved. They now have clearly defined targets and objectives which are shared with pupils in each lesson. The curriculum is enhanced by the school's provision for fulfilling its aims in making pupils independent learners. This is reflected in the curriculum policies and planning for all subjects enabling pupils to gain increased self-confidence and develop their thinking skills. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning in the *Plan, Do, Review* sessions they take part in each week. In these lessons pupils plan what they will do, within guidelines devised by their teachers, and then critically examine the success of their efforts afterwards.
21. The curriculum is enriched by the visits pupils make which are all linked directly to the topic or theme for that half-term. Thus pupils have visited a variety of places including museums in London, the Dulwich Picture Gallery, Tyland Barn and the Guildhall. The school also makes good use of visiting experts to provide good learning experiences. These have included drummers, a rabbi and an expert on bats. During the inspection,

pupils made rapid progress in learning a range of African dance movements under the expert guidance of a trained dance teacher. Although there are no after-school extracurricular activities, the school provides opportunities at lunchtime for pupils to take part in sports in the hall.

22. The school ensures that all pupils have an equal access to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons helping them to play a full part in the life of the school. As well as individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs, all pupils have individual learning targets.
23. The school's provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Each class has timetabled *Circle Time*, where children can discuss their feelings and welfare issues like how to avoid and resolve conflict. In addition, children benefit from a weekly *Golden Time* for choosing activities, as well as their regular *Plan, Do, Review* sessions. These all enable pupils to learn independence and explore their own and others' feelings and ideas. In other subjects, notably science, physical education and religious education, pupils learn much about health matters.
24. The school enjoys a good relationship with the junior school that shares the site. Staff at the two schools share ideas and experiences well including a mutually beneficial arrangement for the joint writing of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs planned for the end of the academic year for pupils transferring from one school to the other.
25. Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school provides adequate opportunities for prayer, reflection and meditation in the well-planned assemblies each day. Religious education and *Circle Time* contribute to pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding. Pupils showed genuine excitement at finding a seed inside a sycamore rotor and burst into spontaneous applause when a bulb was lit in an electrical circuit.
26. Teachers provide good role models on which pupils can base their own responses and behaviour; showing them kindness and courtesy. The school provides a strong moral code with the *Golden Rules* prominently displayed in every class. The very good behaviour observed during the inspection bears testament to the effectiveness of the school's strategies. In *Circle Time* lessons pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their own and other's feelings. For example, pupils in Year 1 considered the theme of *friendship* with the teacher emphasising trust and toleration of others' ideas. Teaching strategies encourage co-operation, for example in the extensive use of partners working together in mathematics and science. In many classes, children plan in pairs and retell to the whole class what their partner has told them, which also improves their listening and speaking skills. In physical education, pupils willingly demonstrated to each other as well as offering their honest opinion on the merits of others' performances. Pupils felt proud to wear the golden sashes accorded to '*Golden Hands*' pupils among whose jobs is the collection of litter around the school, of which there is very little. The school supports a range of charities, including Mencap.
27. The school is good at promoting pupils' awareness of their own heritage and cultural traditions through visits and visitors. The traditions and beliefs of other cultures are also made known to pupils. The school has, for example, visited a local synagogue. As well as observing Christian festivals, pupils have learned about the Chinese New Year and the beliefs of some African peoples in how their religions play an important part in every aspect of their lives. Pupils in Year 2 have made extensive studies of George Stephenson but have also been challenged to find out what they can about foreign inventors such as Benjamin Franklin and Alessandro Volta. Pupils in many classes are encouraged to answer the register in French, German and other languages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. Pupils are well cared for in a happy atmosphere where they are made to feel settled and secure. This contributes to children's confidence and has a positive effect on their learning. Teachers, teaching assistants and other staff know the children well. There are effective child protection procedures in place. These follow well-established local education authority guidelines and are well-known to staff. There are good procedures for dealing with and recording bumps and bruises and minor first aid, and very good arrangements for caring for pupils who need routine or emergency medication. Many children in the school

suffer from asthma, and there is a school Asthma Policy which spells out clearly to parents and to staff how children can best be supported in the event of an asthma attack. Under specific written consent from parents, the school stores and administers antibiotics for children who need to take this medication during the school day. Several children have known allergies and their specific condition and needs are clearly identified and displayed in the school office so that staff are aware of how to respond in the event of a child needing urgent help. For example, staff have been trained to use the specialist equipment for administering adrenaline for children who might need an urgent injection because of serious nut allergy.

29. There are very good procedures in place for promoting good behaviour. The school's *Golden Rules* are positively worded so as to encourage good behaviour rather than spelling out a list of prohibitions. They are consistently applied throughout the school, and are understood and appreciated by even the youngest children and this is reflected in the very good behaviour seen in every class. The school's behaviour policy is also supported through *Circle Time* in each class, where children have the opportunity to discuss concerns, and where teachers can focus on issues such as bullying and name-calling to help prevent incidents occurring. Pupils' good behaviour is rewarded each week with *Golden Time*, where at the end of each Friday afternoon children are given the chance to choose from a menu of different fun activities. The sanction of the potential loss of some of this *Golden Time* is very effective in deterring misbehaviour.
30. There are good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Registers are properly taken and the school office maintains an accurate electronic record which can be used to identify any patterns of absence. Parents are expected to notify the school of any absence, and a form is sent home to make it easier for them to comply. Sherwin Knight Infants has taken on pupils who had been reluctant attenders at their previous schools and has been successful in getting them into school regularly.
31. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and monitoring their attainment were identified as a significant weakness in the last inspection. Since then, the school has developed and implemented assessment procedures that are both extensive and effective. Each pupil has a record sheet that highlights the progress they are making towards reaching the standards expected for their ages. There are mid-year and end of year reports which give parents a good indication of what their child can do, and how well they are achieving. Realistic, individual targets are set for each child, including those with special educational needs. These are reviewed every half-term and discussed with parents. It is a particularly good feature of the assessment process, that all pupils have their own individual targets, not just those with special educational needs. Teachers regularly remind pupils of their targets, adding to the inclusive ethos of the school. Pupils in all classes take responsibility for seeing that their targets are met and take great pride in achieving their goals. Progress is recorded in all areas of the curriculum, although the targets are set in personal development, English and mathematics. These thorough assessments are used to inform planning. This is especially appropriate in the *Foundation Stage* where learning is based on what each child needs to learn next.
32. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in this aspect of the school's provision for pupils. The weaknesses in monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress have been tackled so that there are now good systems in place. Provision for pupils' welfare and personal development, which were judged as satisfactory in the last inspection, are now very good, as are the systems for promoting good behaviour, which is again an improvement since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The school has developed a very effective partnership with parents which is much improved since the last inspection. Parents are highly supportive of the school and value particularly the good teaching, the good behaviour and the progress their children make. The information provided for parents is very good. Pupils' annual reports are full of detail on what children can do and are particularly good at analysing pupils' personal development. All of the reports sampled included very helpful targets for pupils which identified clearly for children and their parents what pupils needed to do to do better. These annual reports are supplemented with mid-year interim reports that give a very good guide to parents on how well their children are getting on. The annual and interim reports are valued by parents. The school's prospectus is much improved since the last inspection. It is attractive and informative. The governors' annual report is satisfactory, although it treats only cursorily some of the statutory requirements and is used principally as a vehicle for promoting the schools' achievements.

34. There are very good induction procedures for children entering the reception class. Children are invited to *storytime* sessions, and each has a home visit from their teacher and classroom assistant before they start school. For all parents, there are termly meetings to meet teachers and learn about the progress their children are making and all parents are invited to join their children in class each week for the last half-hour of lessons on a Tuesday. In practice only a small minority of parents take up this opportunity, but it is much valued by those who do. All parents of pupils with special educational needs have half-termly meetings with staff to review their individual education plans so that these parents are fully involved in their children's learning.
35. Each term information about what their children will be studying is sent home as one of the school's many newsletters. This helps parents who want to support their children's learning at home, for example by finding relevant topic books. Every half-term there are curriculum meetings for parents. Curriculum meetings on numeracy took place during the inspection week. Two separate sessions were presented, one immediately after school and the other in the evening, so that as many parents as possible had an opportunity to attend. In addition, the school has taken the initiative in organising training and support courses for parents. In response to issues raised by parents, the school has organised a parenting course designed for parents who wish to improve the behaviour of their children at home. It is being led by the behaviour management team from the local education authority. A family literacy group, involving ten families, is also in progress. One of its many aims is to help parents to assist their children at home. It follows a family numeracy course that was held last year.
36. The involvement of parents in the life of the school is good and has a substantial impact on pupils' learning. Once a year, parents are asked to complete a questionnaire and the results of this are included in the school's development planning. There is no parent teacher association, but the school successfully calls for volunteers to help with social and fundraising events. The parents who attended the family numeracy course are voluntarily organising events to raise funds to improve heating in the hall. Parents come to school to support concerts and similar events. A small number help in classrooms and on trips. Parents make good use of the home/school contact books, which are well used and are invaluable for parents who want to help their children learn.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The leadership and management of the school is very good. Since her appointment, the headteacher has been responsible for a number of changes. She and her senior management team have a very clear view of the educational direction the school is taking and the kind of school it should be. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection and is endorsed by the many parents who say that the school has turned around since the headteacher arrived. It is now very effective, with very good leadership and management leading to good teaching that is raising the attainment of pupils and ensuring that they make good progress. It has demonstrated very good improvement since the last inspection and now provides very good value for money.
38. The headteacher has a very clear vision for raising pupils' attainment. She is enthusiastic and all staff share her drive and commitment to improving standards in all aspects of the school, especially teaching and children's standards of attainment and learning. The school's aims are fully realised in the life and work of the school. The children's needs and creating a culture for learning are central to all school development. Practical steps have been taken to ensure that children make good progress. Teachers have reviewed and developed teaching methods and the organisation of classes. They have used the *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies* effectively to raise standards. They have a shared commitment to enabling children to be independent in their learning. This, together with the good teaching, is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment.
39. The headteacher motivates staff very effectively by involving them fully in developments and identifying and praising their effort and achievements. She has created confidence and trust so that staff take part in open and honest discussions for improving their own practice. She undertakes both rigorous formal and informal monitoring of teaching, followed up with feedback on strengths and areas for development. Teachers are expected to address any weaknesses within an agreed timescale. Where it is required a

programme of support is organised. These processes have now been formalised through the statutory performance and management system and have been very effective in significantly raising the quality of teaching. The school has recently received an *Investors in People* award. Assessors praised the quality of staff development, the induction processes for new staff and the commitment to continuous improvement. Inspectors similarly judged these to be notable strengths.

40. Curriculum co-ordinators have responsibility for developing their subjects. They are involved in a comprehensive and effective programme of monitoring. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and standards of attainment. Although the programme for co-ordinators to monitor colleagues' practice was curtailed soon after its start due to the need to cover for a long-term staff absence, co-ordinators of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have had some opportunities to observe teaching. The main involvement to date has however been on regular monitoring of teaching plans, displays and in assessing pupils' work against *National Curriculum* requirements. Co-ordinators generally have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and provide support for individual teachers to improve their skills and practice.
41. A part-time teacher was appointed as special needs co-ordinator but the need to cover for the absent member of staff has meant she has had teaching responsibility for a class since her appointment. She is able to monitor paperwork and provision but is, at present, unable to take an active role in supporting pupils with special educational needs. Money identified for special educational needs is well spent however. Where there is shortfall, money from the school budget is used to ensure that pupils receive appropriate targeted support and that they make good progress.
42. There have been substantial changes in the composition of the governing body over the last year. Governors have undertaken suitable training and now show much greater confidence. They contributed fully to the consultation process for identifying priorities for school improvement and discussed and approved the draft plan. They are playing a growing part in shaping the educational direction of the school. They satisfactorily fulfil their statutory duties and are very supportive of the school.
43. Appropriate priorities are set for raising attainment and overall improvement through a carefully prepared and thorough school improvement plan. The headteacher and senior managers drafted the plan for school improvement following extensive consultation with governors, parents and all staff. They also took very thorough account of statutory test results, outcomes of monitoring and the key issues from the previous inspection. This range of activities and information ensures that all have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The headteacher and governors use the plan as a working document so that reviews and evaluations are undertaken regularly to ensure that progress is appropriate.
44. The allocation of funds in the school's budget is linked well to the improvement plan. Additional grants are used effectively to supplement funding from the school's base budget. The increase in the number of teaching assistants, for example, has been beneficial in supporting children's learning. It is clearly a good and appropriate use of the grant for school self-improvement. Financial management is very good. The school has carried forward a small but prudent sum of money to meet any unexpected financial demands. The part-time finance assistant undertakes the routine tasks efficiently and prepares comprehensive, intelligible reports for governors. He prepares a range of options for governors to consider in setting the budget, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. His work complements that of the administrative assistant who undertakes a range of duties very competently and efficiently. They are meticulous in seeking competitive prices for goods and services, to the benefit of the children. They compare the costs of different services with those across the local authority. Changes in contracts have already led to savings and to better services. Good use is made of technology to support financial and general administration of the school. It is used to track expenditure and to model future spending alternatives. Technology is also used well by teachers for planning and for preparing reports on children's attainment and progress for parents.
45. The school has a good number of teachers who are trained and experienced to match the needs of the curriculum. The school has funded additional staffing to ensure that children are taught in single age classes. This has meant that some class sizes are smaller than average. The advantage of this has been that children have had much individual and small group support that has enhanced their learning and achievement. A generous number of committed teaching assistants ably support children's attainment and

progress. An assistant based in the library each afternoon enables teachers to send children to work there independently in small groups. Professional development has a high priority, and staff receive training linked to the school improvement plan to enhance their skills.

46. The overall number and quality of staff has enabled the school to support children with special educational needs, so that they make good progress. This goes some way to countering the current use of the special needs co-ordinator to cover a class during the long-term absence of a member of staff. The need to cover the class for the absent teacher has also reduced the time available for releasing other staff from class responsibilities to monitor colleagues' teaching. At the time of the inspection there were a number of initial teacher training students based at the school. Their work was well planned so that they were well prepared for the lessons, gained much from working alongside good teachers and also contributed to children's learning.
47. The school has a satisfactory range and quantity of resources for all subjects other than information and communications technology. Resources are effectively used to enhance learning. Good use is made of books in the literacy sessions and other subjects to develop children's reading skills. Book displays are linked well to themes developed in classes. The library is attractively and well organised. Good use is made of the library to enhance children's enjoyment of books and to develop skills in finding information. The number of computers is below average. As a result they are not used consistently or effectively across different subjects nor for enabling children to practice skills demonstrated by teachers.
48. The accommodation is poor. The buildings that were intended to be temporary require much maintenance due to their age. The main disadvantage however, is that there is some distance between buildings, which requires children spending substantial time in dressing appropriately and moving to assemblies, physical education lessons, dinners and, for some, the library. This causes particular difficulties during winter months and inclement weather. The limited funds that have been made available to the school for improving the buildings are insufficient to address the disadvantages to any great extent. Despite the unsuitability of the accommodation, teachers and other staff create a most stimulating environment. Displays are very well thought out and children's work is valued in them. Excellent use is made of see-through drapes to create different areas for such activities as role-play or reading. The role-play areas are well used for developing children's imagination and speaking and listening. Much attention is given to making book areas inviting and comfortable. Good use is made of the satisfactory outdoor play space.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to improve the standard of education provided to pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - (i) raise attainment in information and communications technology by
 - giving children more opportunity to use computers in other subjects
 - ensuring children have fuller opportunities to develop their skills
 - implementing plans to increase the number of computers and to create a computer suite for more effective whole class teaching; (*paras 47, 65, 70, 78, 89, 90, 91, 92*)
 - (ii) ensure that lessons in different classes within the same year group cover subjects in similar depth; (*paras 18*)
 - (iii) continue efforts to secure replacement of the poor quality buildings. (*paras 48*)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan. (*Paragraph references are in brackets*)

- A. provide more opportunities for recording work in science; (*para 63, 74*)
- B. improve the way in which handwriting is taught; (*para 64*)
- C. review the timetable to ensure that lessons do not go on too long (*para 18*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	14	54	32	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	252
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	34
Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	56
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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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 the infants

Number of registered pupils in final year of the infants for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	47	51	98

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	37	40
	Girls	44	46	49
	Total	77	83	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (63)	85 (72)	91 (78)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	36	39	39
	Girls	46	48	50
	Total	82	87	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (75)	89 (80)	91 (80)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	146
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.9
Average class size	23.1

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	235

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-00
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	£
Total income	563,852
Total expenditure	555.005
Expenditure per pupil	1,687
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,416
Balance carried forward to next year	8,847

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

285

Number of questionnaires returned

95

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	45	4	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	51	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	36	15	6	11
The teaching is good.	50	48	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	44	14	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	33	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	33	1	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	42	44	8	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	52	38	6	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	43	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	23	13	10	22

(figures may not sum to 100 due to

rounding)

**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

50. Children enter the nursery at approximately three and a half years old with standards that are generally below what is expected for their age. A significant proportion have below average speech and language skills and the school works hard to successfully improve these. There are two points of entry into the reception classes and the children either transfer from the nursery or from local playgroups. There are very few children who have not had any formal pre-school education. By the time they leave the reception classes, most of the children are likely to achieve the early learning goals in all areas of learning.
51. Teaching in the *Foundation Stage* is good with some very good features. Much appropriate emphasis is put on encouraging the children to gain independence and developing language skills. All staff form very good relationships with the children and plan to meet the needs of every individual child effectively. Recent changes to planning mean that staff plan for a few weeks and learning develops according to the interests of the children and is supported by accurate assessment of their needs. The school has adopted a *Plan, Do, Review* system which allows the children to take responsibility for their own learning by deciding which activities they would like to pursue and then evaluate what they have learnt. Very good day to day assessments help the staff to plan the activities that the children can choose from. All areas of learning are covered effectively and there is an appropriate balance between those that the children choose for themselves and those that adults direct. In the nursery the children spend much of their time on their own chosen activities, whilst in the reception classes there are more adult directed activities. This is appropriate and means that the children are fully prepared to enter *Key Stage 1*. There are, however, times when the children are sitting on the carpet for too long and this can lead to loss of concentration so that lesson time is not best used. This is especially noticeable after assembly, for example, when children sit for a further period to plan what activities they are going to do and listen to others' plans. The *Foundation Stage* is well co-ordinated with designated time set aside for staff to plan together and review provision. The high standards identified during the last inspection have been maintained and built upon.

Personal, social and emotional development

52. Children in both the nursery and reception classes make good progress towards the goals in this area of learning. The school's *Plan, Do, Review* process enables the children to become independent and begin to take responsibility for what they learn. All children plan their own activities with confidence. They share resources fairly and take turns willingly. When sharing their work in small groups, they listen to each other and value everyone's contribution. Behaviour is very good in both the nursery and reception classes. All children demonstrate a mature approach to their learning and respect for each other.

Communication, language and literacy

53. Much emphasis is put on this area of learning and the children make good progress towards the early learning goals. In the nursery the children are encouraged to speak clearly and listen attentively. This is developed effectively in the reception classes where children contribute to small group discussions confidently. In all classes the children are able to take books home to share with their parents and staff encourage a love of books. Children learn how to read and are confident when sharing books with an adult. All classes have good book corners as well as a designated writing area. Children in the nursery learn to make marks on paper and this is developed in the reception classes where children are beginning to spell simple words. Letter names and sounds are taught well and the children use their developing knowledge to begin to write for themselves.

Mathematical development

54. Children make good progress in this area of learning. In the nursery, the children, with support, can count the number present and correctly match one to one when counting. In the reception classes, the children are confident when identifying how many more or less are present than the day before. In the nursery, the wheeled toys have been numbered and the children can put them in order. Number rhyme singing supports mathematical learning well. Mathematical language is used effectively. The children learn about shapes and sizes. Some children in the nursery have explored *longer* and *shorter*, and, in the reception class, some children have compared sizes. During role-play activities, the children begin to solve simple problems about the correct number of plates. This is extended in other areas of learning and children begin to use their skills when building and making models.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

55. Good progress is made in this area of learning. The children learn about many natural and man-made materials and are encouraged to find out for themselves in well-developed discovery areas. There are computers for the children to use and they are confident when using the keyboard and the mouse. Each classroom has many resources to support designing and making and the children produce some thoughtful models. In the reception classes the children have made maps of holiday destinations and can talk about various features, such as beaches and the sea.

Physical development

56. Children make good progress in this area of learning. The outside area is well used throughout the *Foundation Stage* to encourage them to be confident and co-ordinated. The children are able to ride bicycles and other wheeled toys and are keen to demonstrate their abilities. There is a wide variety of materials to enable the children to practise skills such as cutting and drawing. The children are able to use all of these safely and with increasing skill.

Creative Development

57. There are many resources and opportunities to support creative development and the children make good progress. They take responsibility for initiating their own activities and are able to use resources effectively to produce good pictures and models. Sand and water are always available and the children experience other materials such as dried pasta and sawdust. The use of language is encouraged through these well-planned activities and the children are encouraged to respond using all of their senses. The role play areas are well presented and used effectively to enable the children to make up their own stories and act out their experiences. Music is a particularly good feature of the *Foundation Stage*. All children have access to a wide range of instruments and they are able to sing a wide selection of songs.

ENGLISH

58. Attainment in the reading and writing tests at the end of the infants in 2000 was below the national average. When compared with similar schools attainment in reading was below average and well below for writing. Detailed analysis of results over the last three years however, shows a significant improvement in reading that is greater than the national trend. More children attained the higher level in reading than nationally. In writing, results continued to drop until 1999 but there was significant improvement in 2000. Girls are doing better than boys in writing, by a wider margin than seen nationally, but the gap has narrowed over the past three years. Pupils' work seen during the inspection show that improvement has continued, with attainment for seven-year-olds now in line with that expected for their age. Attainment in English is considerably better than at the last inspection. The school made it a priority to raise attainment in all aspects of English and challenging targets have been set for 2001 to further raise standards. The *National Literacy Strategy* has been effectively implemented, developed and consistently applied across the school.

59. Children begin Year 1 with speaking and listening skills appropriate for their age. They make good progress and by the age of seven, their speaking and listening skills are well developed. Opportunities are created each day for pupils to practice their skills. During *Circle Time* and in every literacy session children take turns to speak. They listen carefully to others. In numeracy lessons, children in pairs clearly explain their methods for working out sums. Teachers value children's contributions and give them time to formulate and express their ideas. Most children speak clearly in sentences. By the age of seven they have developed an understanding that expression is important in making what they say interesting to others. Teachers take opportunities to extend children's vocabulary, and pupils of all abilities remember and use vocabulary introduced in previous lessons.
60. By the age of seven, most children reach satisfactory standards in reading. Average and higher attaining pupils read with expression, taking note of punctuation and changes in print to vary the pace and tone in reading. When they come across unknown words they use combinations of strategies to read. They sound out letters competently and then check that the word makes sense in the context, making corrections if needed. Children make good progress during their time in the school because of the good emphasis which is put on teaching and learning reading skills through focused work in the literacy sessions. Year 2 pupils, for example, look for speech marks and think about how they will read the speech with expression. Pupils with special educational needs read books with simple sentences using pictures and some knowledge of letter sounds with developing confidence, making good progress. Children enjoy a variety of books. Many read frequently both at school and at home. Although girls have generally done better than boys in reading, the margin between them has narrowed and is similar to that seen nationally.
61. Pupils attain average standards in writing by the end of Year 2. They undertake a wide range of activities including writing instructions, stories, poems and letters. Children's progress in speaking and their wide reading is having a positive impact on their writing. Children use their good knowledge of letter sounds in their writing so that time is not lost in asking for help to spell unfamiliar words. This develops children's independence in learning. Many common words are spelt correctly but some errors are not corrected soon enough. Children make good progress throughout the infants. In Year 1, higher attaining pupils progress from writing one sentence to three or four. Children who start the year writing barely decipherable words which teachers transcribe, progress to writing simple sentences with many words spelt correctly. In Year 2, further good progress is made. Stories are well structured and frequently well punctuated. Children use a wider vocabulary to create interest. Generally, girls continue to do a little better than boys in writing, but the margin between them has narrowed over the past three years so that it is now very similar to that seen nationally.
62. Teaching is good overall. All teachers were seen teaching English at least once. 70% of the lessons were good or better, and 10% were very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers set high standards for children to aspire to and achieve. They engender positive attitudes to reading and writing. In one Year 2 class, children gained much joy in acting out the story of *Rumplestiltskin* that led to reading and reciting the speeches with great expression. This was then reflected in small group reading activities. Lively questioning stimulates children's thought and imagination. In a '*writers' workshop*', the teacher encouraged children to discuss their ideas in pairs and extend their ideas. Good attention is given to lower attaining pupils to ensure that they understand the teaching and learning points. Class assistants are very well used. They are skilful in helping children to develop reading and writing. In one reading activity an assistant got children to think about how they would feel if they were the ladybird in the burning house, as part reading the poem '*Ladybird ladybird fly away home*'. This helped children to think more carefully about the meaning of the poem. In whole class sessions they sit with the children and give good support to lower attaining pupils and record notes on what children say. Effective support is provided for pupils with special educational needs so that although their standard of attainment remains below average they make good progress.
63. Teachers plan thoroughly together in year groups, sharing ideas and skills. The outcomes of the plans are not however consistent across all classes so that the quality and quantity of children's work varies. There has been a deliberate school focus on children becoming independent in their work. As a result, the overuse of copying and worksheets has stopped and children are using their literacy skills across subjects. On a few occasions however, this drive for independence is not fully matched to children's needs. Instructions for some activities are not explained in sufficient detail or modelled to enable

children to achieve the intended outcomes. Teachers do not always insist that pupils use skills developed previously when there is a focus on a new skill so that, for example, children do not always spell familiar words correctly when they are developing the skill of using speech marks. Teachers have not yet taught children how to write up their findings in science lessons and they are not given enough guidance on how best to record this work.

64. The handwriting policy has been introduced this academic year. It is having more impact in Year 1 than in Year 2 where children have already developed a different writing style. Good links are made between forming and joining letters and sounds of letters. Whole class handwriting lessons are not always sufficiently well planned to take account of the needs of all children. Children in Year 2 who are still unsure of correct letter formation practice the same letter patterns as those who have mastered the skill. Individual support is not always sufficient to ensure progress. In Year 1 some children practise writing while sitting on the carpet and leaning on the floor. This is unsatisfactory as it does not support them in developing suitable positioning of paper or pencil control.
65. The English co-ordinator is leading effectively in raising standards. Although the programme for monitoring teaching has been curtailed due to staff absence, the co-ordinator regularly monitors colleagues' plans, making suggestions for development where appropriate. She leads on assessing pupils' writing. She undertook an analysis of the 2000 statutory spelling tests to identify specific weaknesses and drew up an action plan for addressing them. This is beginning to have a positive impact, particularly in Year 1. The reading scheme in place at the last inspection has been replaced by a compilation of published schemes and additional readers. This is a significant improvement as it enables children to make choices within a band of books of similar difficulty. Reading areas in classes are attractive and children enjoy browsing with books there. The library has been restocked. Books are of good quality and are well organised. The library complements the fiction and non-fiction selection in classes. It is well used to support children in developing their enjoyment of books and for finding information. Computers are not sufficiently well used in literacy sessions.

MATHEMATICS

66. Results in mathematics in the national tests last year at the end of *Key Stage 1* were below average both nationally and when compared with similar schools. Trends over time indicate however that there has been a steady improvement in pupils' attainment, with a marked improvement since the last inspection. During the inspection, the standard of most of the work seen was broadly in line with the national average, with some, particularly in children's understanding of number, being above average. Pupils are less confident in measuring, and few examples were seen during the inspection of the children learning these skills. Overall however, work seen during the inspection shows that improvement has continued in mathematics since the 2000 tests. Previous results had indicated that girls were doing better than boys in mathematics but this gap has narrowed. The staff of the school are committed to further raising the attainment of pupils in mathematics and have identified areas for improvement in order to achieve this.
67. By the age of seven, most children can add and subtract simple numbers in their heads. They can order numbers up to 20 and understand place value of tens and units. Higher attaining children work with larger numbers which include hundreds. They can subtract numbers up to twenty and are learning the relationship between addition and subtraction. They are beginning to learn multiplication tables and to do simple division. They can recognise all coins and can find simple totals and work out change. Most children can tell the time to the hour, the half-hour and the quarter-hour.
68. All teachers were seen teaching mathematics and almost 80% of teaching was good or better, with almost 30% of the lessons judged to be very good. This is a very good picture overall. The introduction of the *National Numeracy Strategy* has enhanced teacher confidence and provided a structure which has had a positive impact on the children's learning. Teachers are clear about what they intend the children to learn and they share this with the pupils at the start of each lesson. Teachers have good relationships with the children which allow lessons to continue in an interesting and uninterrupted way. Teaching is enhanced by the effective deployment of teacher assistants who provide a valuable support to teachers in their management of lessons.

69. In their lessons, teachers rightly emphasise the importance of mental arithmetic skills. Children are taught a range of methods to enable them to do mental calculations reliably. Teachers are aware of the needs of all children and lessons are planned with learning opportunities which enable children of different abilities to work at their own level. Expectations are high and teachers ask perceptive and thought-provoking questions which challenge all pupils including the most able. Pupils with special educational needs are well-supported in mathematics throughout the school.
70. Staff work hard to ensure that mathematics is made interesting for the children. Classroom displays draw attention to mathematical ideas, and incidental opportunities are found to encourage the children to think in numbers. For example, during registration pupils are asked to calculate how many children are present. Opportunities for counting are also found in other subjects such as science and geography. Although there are some opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology to support their learning in mathematics, these are too limited.
71. Children show a positive attitude to mathematics and are keen to participate in lessons. They show a high level of interest and commitment and are keen to participate to discussions. Children work well in small groups, sharing resources and working co-operatively.
72. The development of mathematics in the school, including the introduction of the *National Numeracy Strategy*, has been very ably co-ordinated by the knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader. Significant changes have been made within a short period of time, and a strong personal example has been set. She has managed a series of staff meetings which identified the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and this helped teachers to identify a plan for raising attainment in the subject. As a result, improvements have been made which have had a direct and immediate effect on raising standards. Other recent positive developments include the meetings for parents, intended as an introduction to helping children at home with their number work.

SCIENCE

73. By the time children leave the school, standards in science are in line with the national average. Teacher assessments show that almost all pupils in Year 2 are expected to attain appropriate levels, with over a third, an above average proportion, attaining the higher levels. This shows very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were well below the national average. Teacher assessments in 2000 showed that 91% matched the national average, with 46% assessed as having attained the higher level. This proportion was well above the national average. These results compare favourably with those of similar schools.
74. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to carry out investigations in order to test things out. The school has made great advances in providing pupils with the opportunities to apply their knowledge in practical situations and carry out investigative work. This was an area found wanting in the previous inspection. The main thrust of the school's approach to science is through investigation and practical work. This has enabled pupils to learn how to carry out experiments, knowing what constitutes a fair test and identifying the variables involved. Thus pupils make predictions based on what they know, test these and then discuss their results against what they expected to happen. For example, children in Year 1 predicted what would happen to plants starved of light or water. Through their investigations, they learned what all plants need in order to grow properly. Children in Year 2, experimented to learn which materials made good conductors of electricity and which made good insulators. Although all pupils can set up and carry out a variety of experiments they do not always record, in a scientific way, what they have done and found out. This reflects the previous inspection findings, although at that time children were judged not to have the literacy skills to do this. This is not the case now as pupils do now have the ability to carry out this important part of scientific enquiry, although they have not been given sufficient guidance on how best to record their work.
75. The quality of teaching and learning in both year groups is good, enabling all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when a number of weaknesses were identified in the teaching of science. The improvement has largely been brought about through changes in teaching methods and increasing

teachers' subject expertise. Teachers have abandoned the use of worksheets and adopted methods requiring pupils to think and try things out for themselves. The emphasis is very much on the practical, and teaching methods reflect this principle. In Year 2, for example, children held hands in a circle to represent an electrical circuit. The flow of electricity was portrayed as the pulse of squeezing hands being passed on to eventually light the bulb - or not if a hand was not linked to another.

76. Teachers make good use of questions to help children apply what they already know and extend their understanding. For example, some of the Year 2 pupils learning about electricity found their bulbs did not light up even though they had a completed circuit. Through the use of skilful questioning these pupils tested each part of the circuit before finding the reason for the failure and in so doing reinforced their knowledge. Others were led to make generalisations about metal and its electrical conductivity powers from the results of their investigations. The ways in which higher attaining pupils are provided for is not explicitly planned though, and sometimes work initially lacks sufficient challenge to extend them. Higher attaining pupils are however catered for as lessons develop. Their learning is enhanced when they extend their own work or when teachers set them more challenges as the lessons progress. For example, pupils testing for materials that conduct electricity, of their own accord made longer circuits using extra batteries and wires. They learned a lot from discussing with each other and their teacher the effects these changes had.
77. Teachers manage their pupils very well, providing relevant and absorbing work that generates interest and maintains children's attention. Lesson objectives are shared in a meaningful way and returned to at the end of the lessons when the work is discussed. Good use is made of brainstorming sessions which not only help pupils learn about the topic but also enable teachers to gauge the extent of pupils' knowledge and so help plan the next lesson appropriately.
78. Children have very positive attitudes to their work and enjoy carrying out their investigations. They are confident speakers and keen to talk about what they are doing. In Year 2, children explained in some detail where electricity was generated and the different stages it goes through before being fed into our homes via cables. Pupils are enthusiastic in both their practical work and discussions. They behave well, co-operate when sharing equipment and give each other advice and help in their investigations. Although pupils do obtain information from encyclopaedia programs, often extending their studies at home and making use of the internet, computers are not routinely used to help children record and analyse their findings and this is a weakness.
79. Through the careful monitoring of lessons, plans and work, the co-ordinator has successfully identified those areas in which improvements were necessary. She has a very clear view of the ways in which standards in science will continue to be raised, for example by improving the standards of pupils' recording. Staff training and better planning have contributed to the improved position since the last inspection.

ART

80. By the age of seven, pupils attain standards in art that are in line with what is expected for their age. By the end of the key stage, children can observe and draw what they see. They use a variety of materials and learn about various artists. In recent work about William Morris, the pupils have been able to examine his work from a variety of sources and use this as an inspiration to create their own patterns. Specific skills are taught so that pupils are able to mix their own colours from a limited palette, print using a variety of tools and make their own sculptures.
81. There were few art lessons seen during the inspection, but in those seen teachers knowledge was good. A variety of relevant resources are provided so that the pupils are interested and motivated to learn. Plans show that all aspects of art are taught during the year and pupils' work is displayed for all to appreciate. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Children support each other and give ideas for improvement. They work together well and enjoy their finished work. The older pupils are beginning to use books to discover various aspects of artists lives, especially William Morris, and are keen to imitate his work. Many of the pupils have researched on the internet at home and bring their research into school for the class to share.

82. Art is well co-ordinated in the school. There are good resources, each class has an art trolley, for example, and the pupils are encouraged to become independent, selecting their own resources for a given task. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues well by ensuring resources are available and used effectively. She has not yet monitored lessons, but has a firm grasp on standards based on looking at plan and on displays around the school. Art makes a significant contribution to the cultural development of the pupils. Work by William Morris is studied and this is contrasted with African art. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. Only two lessons were seen, but in addition, inspectors were able to examine pupils' work and to discuss work with children. It was not possible to meet with the teacher with responsibility for leading the subject as she has been on long-term sick leave and was not in school during the inspection.
84. By the end of *Key Stage 1*, pupils' attainment is in line with what would be expected for their age. This reflects the findings of the previous report. Children can draw and sketch approximations of the models they want to make and list the materials they will need to complete them. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 class, when children were making models of different vehicles. These pupils then went on to use a variety of card, paper, cotton reels and straws to construct their models. However, pupils are not able to comment on the strong and weak points in their designs nor on the merits of one material over another. Pupils make appropriate use of a variety of tools which develops as they move through the school. In Year 1, children use scissors, glue spreaders and other fixers while older pupils are additionally able to use screwdrivers and spanners. All pupils have used construction kits to make models and can describe how components are attached to each other. They have a good knowledge about the design qualities of various constructions, including axles and bridges. Higher attaining pupils identify different types of bridge and say why a suspension bridge might be stronger than one built on 'islands' in a river. Pupils in both year groups have a good understanding of the need to observe safety rules when using tools and equipment.

GEOGRAPHY

85. Only three lessons were seen in geography, although inspectors also looked at children's work in every class. Standards in geography are in line with that which would be expected for pupils' ages. By the age of seven, children know about basic features on a map such as roads and bridges. They can draw a map of the area close to the school and add well-known features. They can describe their map and the features which they have included. They used the computer, for example, to generate a map which shows similar features to their own locality. They have studied a local area, the Medway Valley, and have identified changes to the environment. They have also studied a contrasting area in Africa and the children can identify similarities and differences in the life of a child in a rural village in Ghana.
86. Teachers are well supported by a good range of resources such as maps, aerial photographs and pictures of the school locality and other areas which are to be studied. These resources are used well and have a very positive impact on learning outcomes. Teachers plan their lessons well. They provide opportunities for the children to talk about what they are doing and what they have learned. Children are provided with activities that are matched to their ability so that all children benefit fully from the lesson. The co-ordinator has been responsible for the subject for only a short time. Her own teaching provides a good role model for other staff and she is keen to ensure that teachers have sufficient and appropriate resources to support the children's learning.

HISTORY

87. History and geography are mainly taught in alternate terms, so it was not possible to observe any history lessons during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based entirely on the scrutiny of the school's planning documents and of children's work in books and around the school. Standards in

history are in line with those expected for pupils' ages. By the age of seven, children have an understanding of how things have changed over time. For example, in their study of toys they have seen how different materials have been used and how designs have changed. They talk about their families and how life has changed for their parents and grandparents. They are aware of how they have changed themselves and that their clothes and toys are now different. They study certain incidents in history such as the Great Fire of London and the Gunpowder Plot. They have also carried out a study of change in transport. For example some good work was seen related to rail transport and the development from George Stephenson's *Rocket* to the modern *Eurostar*. Children are encouraged to write about their work in Year 2 and accounts of Stephenson's life were well written.

88. Opportunities are provided for the children to explore aspects of the past at first hand. There have been visits to the Science Museum in London as well as to Rochester Castle and local museums in Kent. The co-ordinator provides useful guidance and support for staff, particularly when visits outside school are being arranged.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

89. Pupils' attainment is below what is expected for their ages. Although the school follows a syllabus that comprehensively covers the expected range of skills, pupils are not able sufficiently to develop their skills across this full range because they do not have enough opportunities to use computers. Pupils word process to present their written work. In one Year 2 class, children have used the computer to draft their writing and so can save, retrieve and amend their work. However this is not generally the case. Younger pupils learn how to use the mouse. This was evident in the quality of pictures drawn in Year 1 of '*favourite toys*' using a paint program. This skill develops appropriately as pupils move through the school so that they can make use of it in different programs. Pupils can access different programs and facilities using *Windows* screens and different icons. Their keyboard skills develop more slowly and pupils have to search for letter keys. However they are familiar with the use of the *enter*, *backspace* and *return* keys.
90. Children in Year 1 have constructed make-believe maps using the computer and have made progress towards depicting a part of the local environment in a 'real' map form. Pupils do not make enough routine use of computers to help them in other lessons, for example in constructing graphs in mathematics or recording in science. Insufficient use is made of computers in English lessons. Current weaknesses notwithstanding, the school has made many improvements since the last inspection. These include giving information and communications technology lessons a regular place on the timetable for each class, providing more and improved equipment, structured lesson plans and the regular evaluation of what it provides. This has done much to improve standards in teaching and learning. The opportunities pupils have, however, are restricted by the number of computers available, which is still well below the national average.
91. In the three lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory. Teachers introduced new skills and concepts to a whole class through demonstrating on one computer. This limited progress, however, as pupils were unable to practise at that time. There is inconsistency between classes in the ways in which pupils are subsequently able to try out newly learnt skills or use new programs.
92. In the short time the co-ordinator has been in the school, many positive changes have been made including the provision of new equipment and the implementation of staff training. The school has plans which are well advanced to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning in information and communications technology. These include plans to more than double the number of computers available and provide a computer suite and opportunities for all pupils to adequately practise and develop their skills.

MUSIC

93. Pupils attain standards in music that are in line what is expected for their ages. Standards in singing are particularly high. Children learn many songs and are confident singers. By the end of the key stage, they

are able to sing in two parts, keeping time and rhythm well. They are confident when playing both tuned and untuned percussion instruments and are able to play to an audience.

94. Few music lessons were observed, but singing throughout the school was seen as it is taught in year groups. This is particularly effective as progress is well planned so that pupils practise singing simple songs and move to more complicated part songs when they are confident. Most children can sing on their own in front of an audience. Teachers had good subject knowledge and were able to encourage pupils to sing songs from another country and to discuss the meaning of these songs. Classes were managed well and all pupils were encouraged to participate fully in the lessons.
95. Pupils enjoy music, especially singing, and listen to each other quietly and in a mature fashion. They use their instruments well and know how to handle them correctly. They respond positively to the teachers and are keen to sing and play. Music is co-ordinated well throughout the school by an experienced leader. She supports colleagues and ensures that they are well prepared for lessons. There are many resources to support music and these are well displayed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 2 their levels of attainment are likely to be in line with those expected for their age. This is because they have sufficiently developed control and co-ordination in their movements as was seen, for example, in several dance lessons. In these lessons pupils were able to produce movements representing different ideas and feelings and put them together in simple routines. For example, children in Year 2 showed the character traits of personalities from *Rumpelstiltskin* while others told the story of seed planting in Africa. In gymnastics, pupils are able to think of and hold a variety of balances or move around the hall in a number of different ways. Children understand the need to 'warm up' before exercise and the effects that exercise has on heart rate. They also know of the benefits of exercise on their health and how muscles and bones enable them to move.
97. The standard of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall, and good in a quarter of the lessons seen. Teachers plan their lessons appropriately and provide pupils with the opportunities to learn and practise new movements. They are encouraging, enthusiastic and often join in with the activities. Teachers make appropriate use of pupils as examples for others to see in evaluating what they might do improve their own performance. In one Year 2 lesson, half the class showed their dance steps to the other half. This gave everyone the chance to demonstrate and observe and comment on what they saw. In this lesson and in those given by a visiting expert, the teachers focussed on the quality of movements. This enabled children to make good progress and learn how to do a few movements really well. In other less effective but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, the emphasis was placed on developing too many different movements. Although pupils had experience of trying many skills, they did not greatly improve the quality of any one of them. In all the lessons seen, pupils demonstrated very good attitudes to physical education and took part with considerable enthusiasm and effort.
98. The co-ordinator for physical education has been in post for less than two months and consequently has had insufficient time to exert an influence on the development of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

99. Pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the local education authority's *Agreed Syllabus* with many children demonstrating above average knowledge and understanding of elements of Christianity and other faiths. In Year 1, the children understand and can describe the fundamental beliefs of the Christian religion and many children have a better factual knowledge of the life of Jesus than would usually be seen among much older pupils. Higher attaining children could, for example, name several of Jesus' disciples and one even vividly volunteered that the disciple who "*told on Jesus, had curly hair and wore a red jacket*". Children of this age also learn about Judaism and can make simple comparisons between the customs and beliefs of the two religions. Pupils are also encouraged to relate religious teachings to their own lives and they talk confidently and thoughtfully about how they treat each other. In Year 2, pupils are introduced to the beliefs and customs of

Hinduism. They have had opportunities to visit a local church and a synagogue. They are encouraged to think more carefully about the teachings of Christianity and to interpret parables. They are beginning sensitively to describe their thoughts about relationships with friends and with members of their own family. Children learn about celebrations, understanding that certain days have a particular significance for different groups of people, and that some are occasions for activities and ceremonies that have a special meaning.

100. Teaching is good overall, with much that is very good. Teachers allow time for the children to think about and discuss their ideas. Carefully worded questions are characteristic of the good lessons seen. Teachers thoughtfully and sensitively pose questions that enable children to express their own opinions and ideas. There is an obvious mutual respect for different views and this contributes to pupils' confidence.
101. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator maintains an overview of the adequate resources which support the teaching of the subject. There are sufficient illustrated books for children of this age, but the layout of the buildings creates a difficulty in locating resources that have to be shared.