

INSPECTION REPORT

MAIDSTONE INFANT SCHOOL

Felixstowe, Suffolk

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124581

Headteacher: Mrs C Darwen

Reporting inspector: Chris Hemmings
014614

Dates of inspection: 20 November 2000 – 23 November 2000

Inspection number: 224727

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Maidstone Road Felixstowe Suffolk
Postcode:	IP11 9EG
Telephone number:	01394 283375
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robert Bareham
Date of previous inspection:	21/10/1996

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Helen Banks 024393	Support inspector	Under fives Mathematics Physical Education	How well is the school led and managed?
Sandie Sykes 027447	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs Geography History Religious Education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well are pupils taught?
John Sweet 027447	Team inspector	Equal Opportunities English Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Maidstone Infant School is located in Walton, an area of Felixstowe near to the container port. The school admits boys and girls aged three to seven from the immediate locality and surrounding area. Many parents are employed at Felixstowe port. Local housing is a mixture of housing association, local authority and owner-occupied. With 179 full-time pupils and 51 part-time children in the nursery, the school is about the same size as other infant schools. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About one in every five pupils are on the register of special educational needs; this is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils with statements of educational need is more than double the national average. The specialist Area Support Centre (ASC), located within the school, provides education for eight pupils with a very wide range of physical and learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is about average compared with other schools. Children's attainment on entry to the school is below the county average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school gives children a solid foundation/grounding in learning and it has many strengths. Teaching is good and the pupils are enthusiastic learners. The school has a family atmosphere in which each and every child is very well cared for and valued. The governors and staff work very well together as a team. This year's results (2000) in the national tests show that the steps taken by the school to raise standards in literacy and numeracy are having a positive effect. However, there are several important areas for further improvement. In particular, the focus upon raising the achievements of the more able pupils, making sure that the children who are under five make sufficient progress in all aspects of their learning and improving aspects of teaching and learning further. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- The headteacher exercises strong leadership.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and behave very well.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development.
- The school cares very well for all the children.
- The quality of education and support provided for the pupils in the Area Support Centre is a strength.
- Standards in art and music are good.
- The way that the governors fulfil their responsibilities and are working to improve the quality of education provided is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards achieved by the more able pupils are too low.
- The role of subject leaders in evaluating and planning what needs to be done to raise standards is not fully developed.
- Teachers do not always successfully develop pupils' thinking and communication skills.
- The quality of education provided for the children in the reception year is not consistently good enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected, in October 1996, satisfactory progress has been made overall with addressing the weaknesses identified at that time. Very good progress has been made with improving the development of pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness. Planning of methods by which the agreed content is to be taught has improved greatly; it now ensures that pupils in the same year groups have very similar opportunities to learn all aspects of the curriculum. The issue of excessive noise levels in classes has been successfully addressed and the climate for learning in classes is good. While good progress has been made with establishing record keeping systems to monitor pupils' progress, the school still does not make enough use of this information in planning so that the needs of different groups of pupils are fully met. Although stimulating work is provided, there has been insufficient progress with consistently challenging the more able pupils to achieve at level 3. The school building has been attractively extended to provide two new classrooms, an entrance area and an office for the headteacher. Further modifications to the original building have improved the facilities for the children and their security.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
reading	C	E	D	E
writing	D	E	C	C
mathematics	D	E	E	E

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

The 2000 national assessment results at the end of Key Stage 1 show an improvement from previous years in the proportion of pupils achieving the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The greatest improvement has been in the pupils' performance in writing where standards match the national average. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards are average in writing but below average in reading and well below in mathematics. This is largely because too few pupils are attaining at level 3. The successful introduction of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy show that the school is well on the way to achieving the challenging targets for the percentage of pupils who will achieve the national average (level 2). Teacher assessments in science show that the school's performance was close to the national average. However, no pupils are attaining the higher level 3. Inspection evidence shows that standards are average in English, mathematics and science. In most subjects pupils of all abilities are making sound progress and in aspects of music, physical education (PE) and art progress is good and pupils achieve above average standards. Children under five make unsatisfactory progress in some aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs in the main school are well supported and make good progress. In the ASC all pupils are achieving as well as they can and they make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes throughout the school. They are enthusiastic and well-motivated learners. They sustain interest in their work and in all the school offers them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally very good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other and show respect and courtesy to adults.
Personal development and relationships	The very good relationships are a strength of the school. Pupils are responsible and sensible. They get on well together and are considerate towards one another.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and pupils arrive on time. There is no unauthorised absence.

The school has a strong family feeling and the atmosphere is pleasant and purposeful. Staff and pupils make a strong contribution to making the school a well-ordered community. The school is very successful in meeting its aim to promote respect and care for others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Of the lessons seen, almost all were satisfactory or better and in just over half the lessons the teaching was good or better. Only two lessons out of the 43 lessons observed were unsatisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the ASC is consistently of a very high quality. In the classes where six and seven-year-olds are taught there is a high proportion of good and better teaching. The teaching of English is satisfactory and in mathematics teaching is good because there is a strong focus on improving pupils' competence in number.

Teachers are well organised and are always clear about the purpose of the lesson. Explanations to pupils are clearly made, gaining their interest and attention. Teachers manage pupils very well and learning support assistants provide good support across the school. Careful attention is paid to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. However, teaching does not always ensure that the higher-attaining pupils are fully challenged and questioning is not always effectively used to extend children's thinking and communication skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of educational visits and visits to the school by experts in various fields.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school clearly identifies the needs of lower-attaining pupils and they are given additional help and good levels of effective support. The support provided for pupils in the ASC is very good indeed. It is a strength.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The school successfully encourages pupils to care for one another and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils. The teachers know them well and are skilful at looking after their pastoral needs. A system for monitoring pupils' academic progress is in place but it is not used to full effect to extend the performance of the more able pupils.

Adequate information about the life of the school is provided to parents. Although reports are clear they do not indicate what children need to do next to improve. Many parents volunteer to help the school, and they make a valuable contribution.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership and, with the support of the deputy headteacher, promotes effective teamwork. Subject leaders provide constructive support for colleagues.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are fully supportive of the school and fulfil their role successfully. They are increasingly involved in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed satisfactory procedures for evaluating its performance. However, the school development plan is not sufficiently clear about how initiatives will have an effect on pupils' learning and the work of subject leaders is not always sufficiently focused on monitoring and evaluating standards.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is good and educational priorities are well supported by appropriate funding.

The school generally deploys its staff, accommodation and resources well. The need to improve provision for children in the Foundation Stage has been identified. Accommodation is well cared for and provides a good learning environment. The head and governors are aware of the principles of Best Value and are beginning to apply them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • Children are making good progress. • The teaching is good. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about what their children are being taught. • Too few activities are provided outside lessons.

Inspection evidence supports the parents' positive views. The range of activities outside lessons is entirely satisfactory. However, more information about what is to be taught would help parents to be more involved in their children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. The school's results and achievements

Standards for seven-year-olds in the 2000 national assessments were close to the national average in writing, below average for reading and well below average in mathematics. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were average in writing and well below average in reading and mathematics. The poorer performance in reading and mathematics was very largely due to the small proportion of pupils achieving level 3. Teacher assessments in science show that the proportion of pupils at level 2 was close to the national average and similar schools. However, no pupils attained the higher level. As a result, overall, attainment was well below the national average for all schools and those with pupils from similar backgrounds.

2. This year's results (2000) indicate a distinct upturn in the pattern of attainment. Up to this year the trend has been one of lowering attainment in reading and mathematics. The test results for the year 2000 for writing indicate that the strategies implemented by the school specifically to raise standards are having a positive impact; the rate of improvement was far higher than the national average. In reading, the 2000 results clearly show a greater rate of improvement than that seen nationally. In mathematics the rate of improved performance is slightly better than the national average.
3. Inspection evidence confirms that the majority of pupils are attaining at the average levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher levels is below average, however.
4. Children in the Foundation Stage are making unsatisfactory progress in some aspects of the curriculum and it is not certain that they will reach the early learning goals in all six areas of learning by the end of the reception year.
5. In English, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is average in speaking and listening and writing. They talk confidently, offering suggestions and talking readily about their work. However, too few pupils are able to express a preference from the books they have read or to say why they have particularly enjoyed a book. Standards in writing are improving as a result of the concerted effort made by the whole school. There is a wide range of attainment in writing with most pupils working at the levels they are capable of. Reading standards are average overall. There are, however, important areas for improvement. These include the development of pupils' skills in

reading to access information and in using a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. Although standards in English are average overall there is scope for further improvement in the performance of all pupils, particularly the higher-attaining pupils.

6. In mathematics, pupils are attaining at average levels overall. Seven-year-olds can carry out calculations, particularly addition and multiplication, to solve number problems involving money. Pupils have a good grasp of mathematical vocabulary. More able pupils are beginning to achieve higher levels through the work they are being introduced to in the new mathematics scheme.
7. In science attainment is average. Pupils successfully develop their skills of scientific enquiry and they are learning to record their observations systematically and accurately. They are making sound progress in learning to use the correct scientific language and terminology to describe what they have seen and found out and they are beginning to predict and review whether what happens met their expectations. However, the more able pupils are not being taught those aspects of the science curriculum which will enable them to achieve level 3 by the time they are seven.
8. In Information and Communication Technology (ICT) pupils reach the expected levels for their age. Basic computer skills are well developed. Older pupils know how to alter text size and fonts to word process for a range of purposes and they know how to save and retrieve work. Pupils attain at higher levels when they use a paint program to explore different styles of art. Although pupils organise and present data in graphic form in mathematics these skills are not being effectively developed in science.
9. In religious education (RE) the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus are met. Pupils have a good understanding of important events in the Christian religion; for example they know why baptism is an important event for a baby and its family. They know about religious festivals and stories and relate them to their own experience.
10. In aspects of art and design (A&D), PE and music pupils achieve above average standards. Pupils create paintings and prints of a high standard using a variety of methods and processes. They mix colours to capture the shapes, colours and textures of autumn leaves, for example, and skilfully represent the work of Van Gogh. In music, pupils sing tunefully and they play recorders very well. In PE there was limited evidence to make secure judgements overall but pupils throwing and catching skills are well developed.
11. In history, geography and design and technology (D&T) pupils meet the expected standards.
12. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are set appropriate targets and they make good progress towards achieving them. Class teachers and the special educational needs coordinator take care to ensure the pupils are given work which is appropriate for them. They are given good support to ensure that they are able to achieve success, particularly in English and maths.
13. **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**
Pupils have good attitudes to school. They enjoy coming to school and they are enthusiastic and well motivated. The very great majority of pupils try hard and show determination to do well. They listen attentively to their teachers, respond quickly to directions and readily contribute their ideas to discussion when asked. Pupils settle easily to their work and sustain their concentration well. They respond particularly well where teachers share their enthusiasm and where activities are stimulating and creative; good examples were seen in mathematics, science, A&D, music and D&T.

14. The behaviour of pupils is very good in the playground at lunchtime, in assemblies and lessons. School routines run smoothly and this is helped by pupils' good behaviour. Pupils behave very well in practical lessons, such as music and, despite their excitement, they take part sensibly. Pupils have a good understanding of the school rules and know that they are fair. As a result any minor behaviour problems are dealt with swiftly.
15. Pupils are very polite and courteous, forming very good relationships with one another and with their teachers and other adults in the school. The school has a very strong family feeling and successfully encourages pupils to be aware of the needs of others. For example, at break times older pupils look after younger ones, or those pupils with disabilities. They do this very well which helps everyone to feel secure and happy.
16. Pupils work very well together. They learn to cooperate in lessons with the active support and guidance of all the adults working with them. Younger pupils share resources well. For example, they encourage each other as they play mathematical games together. Older pupils show respect for each other's work and opinions. For example, when talking about their history topics they listen carefully to their friends and make positive comments about their work.
17. Pupils use resources carefully and responsibly. They show respect for displays in classrooms and handle books with care. Pupils also perform routine tasks throughout the school responsibly, such as taking registers to the office and helping to tidy-up after activities.
18. The level of attendance is above the national average and the rate of unauthorised attendance is minimal.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of all lessons observed. In 51 per cent of lessons, teaching is good or better and in a further 14 per cent it is very good or excellent. There is good and very good teaching across Key Stage 1. A particular strength is the quality of teaching in the ASC.
20. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively. Teachers acknowledge the usefulness of the guidance they have received, together with the school's programme of staff development. Staff have adapted the strategies to meet the identified needs of the school. In literacy, teachers' organisation is good and little time is wasted. Effective planning ensures that pupils' experience a good balance of reading and writing. Teachers model literacy skills well, for example when reading aloud clearly and with good expression.
21. Teaching in mathematics is always satisfactory and often good or very good. Good progress has been made in developing coherent planning and this has been supported by the recent introduction of a commercial mathematics scheme. A wide range of teaching strategies are used to engage the pupils' interest and to develop their understanding. Teachers show enthusiasm for the mental and oral part of each mathematics lesson and the use of active learning styles ensures that all children are involved and motivated to learn.
22. For the most part, teachers have good knowledge of the range of curriculum subjects. Lessons are well organised and supported by clear planning. Little time is wasted in lessons and very effective use is made of support staff and adult volunteers to work with groups of pupils. Teachers foster very good relationships with their pupils and encourage them to work well together. A notable strength of the teaching throughout

the school is the very effective management of pupils. This ensures that levels of concentration are high and, where disruptive behaviour occurs, pupils are not unduly distracted from their work. In consequence, pupils are developing good work habits. This results in a positive ethos for learning which is evident in almost all areas of the school.

23. In the best lessons work is well differentiated to match the range of needs within the class. More open-ended opportunities are provided and questions are used effectively to stretch the more able pupils. In mathematics, for example, where questions are well used, teachers check pupils' understanding and extend their learning. Teachers adapt their teaching as a result of their observations of the pupils and skilfully turn the errors made by the pupils to advantage by helping them to understand how to improve. Pupils achieve higher levels of understanding and skill in lessons in which there is a lively pace and teachers provide a clear framework or demonstration of the work required. In these lessons, teachers also gradually increase the challenge for the pupils and set time limits for activities. A positive feature, common to much of the teaching, is the effective sharing of the learning objectives with the pupils at the start of lessons; this helps the pupils to understand what they are intended to learn.
24. However, there are some shortcomings in teaching. Teachers' expectations of the more able pupils are not consistently high enough; the work provided for them is not always sufficiently challenging to enable them to fully achieve their potential. This was a weakness identified in the last inspection, and the school has not made sufficient improvement with this issue. In a minority of lessons teachers do not use questions sufficiently to probe pupils' understanding, with the result that some misconceptions are undetected. Although praise for work and effort is consistently applied across the school, feedback to the pupils about their work does not always help them know what needs to be done to improve next time.
25. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and they make good progress. Teachers adapt the work to help the pupils achieve well. The quality of extra help they receive is good; it is guided by well-written individual education plans.
26. The quality of teaching for those pupils in the ASC is consistently high.

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

27. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection where many schemes of work were at the developmental stage and did not include sufficient information on teaching methods or organisation.
28. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been implemented and adapted to suit the particular circumstances of the school. Teachers have undertaken a programme of training and plan together effectively in year group teams. A range of good quality resources has been bought to support the teaching of both areas and these are in use in classrooms daily.
29. Planning in all other areas of the curriculum is satisfactory. In A&D and ICT there is an appropriate emphasis on developing the basic skills, knowledge and understanding; the schemes of work set out clearly what pupils will learn. Good schemes of work support the teaching of other subjects. The nationally produced schemes of work from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) form the basis of science, D&T, history and geography planning. These are being systematically adapted to meet the needs of the school. This is a dynamic and evolving curriculum area where good use is made of links with other subjects to enhance learning. For example, good links between literacy and history are made when pupils draft a report about the 'sixties. The teachers are fully aware that there are further links to be made.

30. Planning for religious education (RE) meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The staff meet regularly to plan in teams and this guarantees that pupils have a very similar range of learning experiences.
31. Teachers take great care to ensure that all pupils have equal access to every aspect of the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They are given a range of interesting and appropriate work to do and receive additional help in lessons from teachers, classroom assistants and volunteers to ensure they can make the most of opportunities to learn. Good support from a classroom assistant is available for any pupil for whom English is an additional language, and this enables him or her to take full advantage of the curriculum.
32. Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and support pupils' personal development. These include music and dance clubs, as well activities which enrich the curriculum itself, including opportunities to visit local places of interest, such as Thornham Field Centre and the local coastline. The after-school Disco Club is ably led by a volunteer, who involves over forty enthusiastic pupils in a range of aerobic activities. This contributes well to the health and fitness of the pupils and encourages an enthusiasm for the popular arts.
33. A good range of visitors to the school makes a positive contribution to the curriculum. Among these are visiting theatre groups, artists and the local vicar. There are strong links with neighbouring schools and events are often organised for the staff and pupils, such as a local music festival. For pupils, these provide important opportunities to meet pupils of different ages from other schools. In addition, there are many other links with the community, which make a positive contribution to the curriculum. These include British Telecom friends who work in the school on a voluntary basis, a local supermarket and the police and fire service.
34. The policy for personal development provides a clear statement of aims, and plans provide continuity across Years 1 and 2 through appropriate themes, including healthy lifestyles, keeping safe and relationships. In a lesson observed during the inspection about safe play, pupils were sensitively guided by the teacher to consider potential dangers.
35. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and is now a strength of the school. This represents good progress since the last inspection when spiritual and cultural development was identified as areas for improvement. Feelings of respect, trust and friendship permeate the school. The ethos is warm and welcoming and this supports the development of a family atmosphere. The willingness of staff to take an active part in activities such as the dance club reinforces this strongly. Pupils from the ASC take a full and active part in assemblies and other school activities and this demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equal opportunities and the full inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of school life.
36. This positive ethos is promoted effectively in assemblies and in lessons where pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the effect of their actions on others, or simply to enjoy a moment of stillness. In Year 1 pupils regularly reflect and relax while listening to music after registration. This has a calming effect and ensures the pupils are in a good frame of mind to learn. When a local vicar leads an assembly, the very strong sense of community is further enhanced. The pupils are entranced by his story telling. He makes an outstanding contribution to the schools provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

37. Further opportunities for spiritual development occur in lessons. In a Year 1 science lesson, for instance, pupils showed great delight and surprise when learning about magnets and in a literacy lesson they listened spellbound to the teacher reading aloud.
38. Pupils' cultural development is suitably enhanced through a range of work in different subjects. In history, pupils develop a good awareness of European cultural traditions when learning about the 'sixties. In English, teachers use stories from different cultures to broaden pupils' horizons and in A&D pupils look at the work of a number of artists from different traditions, including Van Gogh and Mondrian. In addition, the school supports a number of charities very successfully and it is currently sponsoring a child in Ghana through Action Aid. All of these activities provide good opportunities to raise awareness of other cultural traditions whilst engendering a strong sense of community in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school cares very well for its pupils. Teachers and other adults in the school know the pupils well and are particularly skilful at looking after their pastoral needs, including those of pupils with special educational needs. The pastoral provision at the school is an area in which the headteacher takes a pivotal role and is a strength.
40. There are very effective procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and the school takes every opportunity to remind parents of the importance of regular attendance which has resulted in it being above the national average for similar schools.
41. The school has a clear policy on behaviour, which is carefully followed by members of staff. The behaviour of most pupils is very good and there is no oppressive conduct or bullying. All parents are given a copy of the behaviour policy.
42. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in developing record-keeping systems. While there is some good practice in the use of assessment to set individual targets for improvement in writing, there is scope for further improvement in the use of assessment. The systems are not, as yet, consistently used effectively to plan appropriately challenging activities for individuals and groups of pupils. This is an area for further development in order to raise educational standards and extend the achievements of the more able pupils.
43. Individual education plans are provided for pupils with special educational needs, to help them overcome their difficulties. There is effective liaison with external agencies and teachers use the plans to make sure that the work given to pupils is well matched to their needs. The progress pupils make is checked carefully and then next steps are planned.
44. Teachers and other staff are aware of child protection and health and safety procedures. There is a published policy and the headteacher efficiently oversees any issues that may arise. All staff have received appropriate training and further refresher training is planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. Most parents are satisfied with the education provided by the school. They report, for example, that their children like coming to school and that their behaviour in school is good. Most parents also feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. They feel that the school works closely with them and helps their children to become mature and responsible. These positive views of parents are endorsed by the findings of the inspection.
46. A very small number of parents have expressed concern that they are not kept well informed about how their children are getting on. Inspection evidence confirmed that, whilst the appropriate number of parent consultation evenings are held when there is opportunity to discuss their children's development with teachers, there is a need to improve the quality of annual progress reports. They contain information on what pupils have studied and achieved during the year but they do not set clear targets on how to improve their performance.
47. A small number of parents have also expressed the view that the range of activities outside lessons is too limited. However, there is no significant difference from that provided by similar schools.
48. Parents whose children have special educational needs meet with teachers to discuss the progress made by their children against the targets set in individual education plans.
49. The range of information provided to parents, such as the school prospectus, governors' annual report to parents and monthly newsletters are comprehensive and well presented. Parents are also given regular written advice on what help they can give to their children at home with mathematics, reading and spelling. All parents have signed the home-school agreement and this is making a positive contribution to the process by which children's work at school is linked with the support given at home.
50. The school has good links with the local community, including the police and fire service. Senior citizens are invited to celebratory services, such as the Harvest Festival and Christmas Carol Service and other school activities. Local firms also give support to the school by facilitating educational visits. For example, one firm arranges for members of staff to help in classrooms on a regular basis as part of their community service programme.
51. The school has an active Parent Teacher Association which raises money to purchase extra equipment for the school. A number of parents, governors and members of the local community assist in school on a regular, planned basis. For example, a former parent runs the weekly after-school Disco Club that is well supported and appreciated by the pupils. Good links have been established with other schools in the Felixstowe area. Arrangements for pupils moving to the next school are well established to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage in learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by staff and governors. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well to ensure effective communication within the school and to maintain the focus on improving standards. This promotes good teamwork within the school. The very positive relationships established in the school create an environment which supports children's learning. The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She promotes effective teaching

and recently has focused more sharply on the need to raise standards in pupils' learning. The school is beginning to make more effective use of a range of data to identify specific areas for development but some of these systems require further work.

53. There is a common sense of purpose amongst the teaching staff. Substantial work has gone into improving the quality of planning in order to improve teaching and learning. All teachers contribute to the priorities for development but these are not always clearly linked to the analysis of data. The school development plan identifies aspects of the curriculum which require improvement but it does not state clearly and precisely what needs to be achieved and how the improvements will be measured. The order of priorities is unclear. As a result some priorities for raising standards, such as the need to improve performance in reading, do not receive sufficient focus. Although the headteacher and staff are aware of the need to raise the attainment of the more able pupils, this focus is not clearly identified in the development plan. The lack of detail in the development plan also makes it difficult to evaluate the impact that new initiatives have on improving standards.
54. Sound progress has been made in developing the role of subject leaders since the last inspection. Subject leaders generally have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in their own subject and they provide constructive support for colleagues. They have looked carefully at pupils' work and identified improvements in presentation, marking and some aspects of learning. However, subject leaders are not given sufficient opportunities to observe their colleagues teaching and offer advice. The work of subject leaders is not always sufficiently focused on improving standards.
55. The coordinator for special educational needs is new to the management post and has already made some improvements and liaison with teachers is strengthening. The school has the capacity to improve further the good provision for pupils across the school with special educational needs, building on the existing very good practice with the specialist team in the ASC.
56. The headteacher has been successful in creating a more open dialogue about teaching and learning and a commitment to improving the school's effectiveness. Members of staff have clear job descriptions and effective procedures are in place for the introduction of performance management. Staff training has been used well to improve curriculum planning and good use is made of visits to other schools to give teachers a clear view of what styles of teaching work best for the literacy and numeracy strategies. With support from the local education authority, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been effectively implemented and are contributing to raising standards.
57. The governors fully and actively support the school. They are beginning to make better use of performance data to establish a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. The headteacher keeps them well informed through regular reports and discussions with the chair of governors. The chair of governors shows great commitment to his role and regularly visits the school. He has a good knowledge of the school's development priorities. Other governors show similar commitment and are actively involved in the school. The partnership which has been established between the headteacher and governors, is most constructive.
58. The funding available to the school is properly directed towards its educational priorities. Effective use is made of specific grants for their designated purposes. The day-to-day administration of the school proceeds smoothly, and financial planning is sound. The headteacher and governors are aware of the principles of Best Value and are beginning to apply them.
59. Teaching and support assistants are well qualified. In most cases support assistants are used well to help children with their learning, particularly in the ASC. The Centre

provides very effective education for pupils with special educational needs and this good practice is currently being developed across the whole school. Good support is provided for the inclusion of children from the Centre in all aspects of school life, including lunchtimes, but this results in additional costs that have to be met from the main school budget. On some occasions the arrangements for inclusion in lessons, such as joining reception children for PE, results in the very specific physical and learning needs of these children being overshadowed by the demands of the younger children and does not appropriately meet the needs of the children from the Centre.

60. The school building is attractive and well maintained, and has been improved since the last inspection by an extension and recent modifications to the facilities for the pupils. However, the provision for children in the Foundation Stage is less adequate and there are plans to reorganise this to improve the quality. The school is well resourced across all subjects. In many classes interactive displays enrich the learning environment by celebrating achievement and stimulating learning.
61. Improvements have been made to linking finance to long-term planning since the previous inspection. Leadership and management remain strong. The school has developed a range of initiatives to raise the attainment of all pupils but these have yet to have sufficient impact on the attainment of more able pupils. The management systems that are currently being developed show that the capacity for the school to improve further is good. Taking into account the good progress made by the majority of pupils, the average unit costs and the need to raise the attainment of the more able pupils, the school provides sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to improve further the school should:

(1) Raise the achievements of the more able pupils by:

- developing the role of subject leaders in evaluating and planning what needs to be done to raise standards;
- targeting specific groups of pupils to support and challenge so that they are enabled to achieve at the higher levels;
- making more effective use of teacher assessment to plan to meet the needs of more able pupils;
- engaging pupils more actively in their learning by developing a wider range of questioning strategies to explore pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking and communication skills.

(2) Improve the quality of education provided in the Foundation Stage by:

- developing procedures for planning to ensure that they support progression in learning towards the early learning goals;
- making better use of observations of individual children's learning and other assessments to plan the next stages in their learning;
- improving support for learning through an exciting and stimulating range of play activities.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

THE AREA SUPPORT CENTRE

63. The ASC provides very well for its pupils and it is a strength of the school. The whole school team supports staff in the ASC well to ensure the pupils are included fully in the life of the school, and in this they are very successful. At work and at play pupils receive very high quality care at all times. As a result the pupils feel very secure and they are confident in embracing all that the school offers. The curriculum and learning opportunities provided are suitably broad. Pupils' personal development is given a high priority, as is pupils' language development. These pupils are very valued members of the school and enjoy the friendship and help of their peers and the adults around them.
64. **Pupils' Achievements**
All pupils are achieving as well as they can. Pupils regularly meet success in the work that is planned for them. Their targets for achievement are clearly expressed, activities are well matched to enable them to achieve their targets and progress towards them is monitored carefully. Speaking and listening skills are given very high priority in all lessons. Most pupils are making good progress within aspects of the early learning goals. In some aspects, music particularly, they make excellent progress.
65. In language and literacy, pupils join in happily with familiar routines, such as singing the alphabet song with their teacher. They can name some familiar objects beginning with a particular sound and identify the letter again when looking through picture dictionaries. Pupils enjoy picture books and readily share with adults their favourites. They join in very well at story time, locating characters in the pictures and repeating simple phrases.
66. In mathematical activities pupils recognise familiar symbols, pinpointing particular activities through the day in turn. They are able to use key words modelled by their teachers to help describe objects by their shape, size and colour.
67. In activities promoting their knowledge and understanding of the world, pupils recognise and name, in signs and words, familiar natural objects such as vegetables and wood. They collect natural materials whilst out walking and sort them for a range of other purposes.
68. Pupils enjoy creative activities and show very concentrated effort during lessons through the very good support of their teachers. They always respond very well to the stimulus for learning. In art, for example, pupils work hard to apply paint carefully, using signs and words to describe the colours and features. In music their skills are very well developed. Pupils can tap simple rhythms using their hands and percussion instruments, matching this to the rhythmic chanting of their own names. They remember their favourite songs well and sing with great enthusiasm. Pupils respond very well to physical activities, taking turns and sharing space and gymnastic equipment in the hall.
69. **Pupils' Attitudes, Values and Personal Development**
Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. It is very clear that they enjoy coming to school very much. When they arrive at school they are happy and looking forward to the day. They understand the routines of the class well and settle easily. Pupils have very good relationships with the adults supporting them. They are encouraged to play and work well together and respond well to all their opportunities. They try very hard and work to the best of their abilities. Generally the pupils listen to instructions well. They are able to concentrate and persevere to complete their tasks, sometimes exceeding all expectations because of the excellent teaching. In music, for example, pupils' joy and exhilaration at their success encouraged them to try even harder,

enabling them to achieve very well. They are making significant strides forward to be independent in many ways, for example, in collecting PE clothes and changing, in taking registers to the office, in behaving responsibly at the end of playtimes. Pupils are very positive about all that the school can offer and take a full, active and happy part in it.

70. How well pupils are taught

Teaching in the ASC is usually good. Sometimes it is very good or excellent. Creative approaches and excellent team work ensures that learning is challenging yet fun. Pupils spend their time at school responding to a full and creative curriculum, developed through a range of flexible, well-planned activities. Well established routines give pupils security; new stimuli add excitement.

71. Clear learning objectives guide the learning and staff consistently convey high expectations of their pupils. Pupils are constantly praised and encouraged to try their best. Feedback to pupils is always constructive. Marking and record keeping is particularly effective in analysing what progress has been made and what steps should be taken next.

72. Behaviour management is very good. All staff show a very sensitive regard for pupils' individual needs and show a high awareness of each pupil's developing language skills. This enables staff to ensure repetition and consistency of response. Staff know their pupils very well and show tremendous enthusiasm and commitment, which strongly promotes confidence and learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2%	15%	41%	37%	2%	2%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y R – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	177
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		30

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y R – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	23

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	43	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	37	37
	Girls	43	48	47
	Total	76	85	84
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (69)	90 (74)	89 (91)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	37	38
	Girls	44	44	47
	Total	76	81	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (74)	86 (82)	90 (89)
	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	150
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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 – Y3

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	25.3

Education support staff: YR – Y3

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	453007
Total expenditure	449913
Expenditure per pupil	1724
Balance brought forward from previous year	20517
Balance carried forward to next year	23611

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	227
Number of questionnaires returned	68

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	28	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	35	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	60	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	50	1	0	6
The teaching is good.	54	40	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	54	15	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	41	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	65	3	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	54	38	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	38	1	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	41	21	1	13

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

73. Children are admitted into the nursery and reception classes on a termly basis. There are a small number of three-year-olds in the nursery. Baseline assessment results show that children's attainment in mathematics and English is below the average for the County on entry to school and nursery.
74. A member of staff from the nursery visits each child at home before they start in the class. Baseline assessment information is used effectively to identify children with special educational needs. However, baseline and other initial assessments carried out in nursery and reception are not used to inform planning for the children's next steps in learning.
75. At the time of the inspection staffing difficulties were experienced in the reception class and this clearly affected children's attitudes and behaviour. Although staff from nursery and reception are planning the Foundation Stage curriculum together there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the purpose of the planning, and this does not clearly support progression in learning within the Foundation Stage. Staff do not keep records of the progress children are making and limited use is made of observations of children's learning to inform what they need to learn next.
76. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory but this varies considerably from some that is very good to some that is poor.
77. The Early Years policy is significantly out of date and does not relate to the six areas of learning covered in the Foundation Stage. Limited progress has been made in the provision for Early Years since the last inspection. In particular, opportunities to develop children's learning through play are still not developed sufficiently and systems of planning and assessment do not clearly support progression in children's learning.
78. **Personal, social and emotional development**
In the nursery provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Children are confident, work well together and enjoy learning. Children are able to select from a range of activities and can dress and undress independently. The structure of the nursery classroom, limited space and the organisation of resources within the nursery sometimes limits choice. In whole class and group activities staff provide good support and children show initiative and are willing to try out new ideas. The staffing difficulties experienced in reception resulted in some poor behaviour and attitudes to learning. Routines and expectations had not been sufficiently developed to enable the children to cope with the changes that took place.
79. **Communication, language and literacy**
Good use is made of story sessions to develop children's interest in and knowledge about books. Children enjoy looking at books, handle them with care and understand they are made up of pages with words and pictures. Routines are used well in the nursery to provide opportunities for children to read familiar words and phrases and to develop their knowledge of sounds. Children in the nursery are making satisfactory progress in learning to write their name independently but there are limited opportunities provided for children to write for a variety of purposes, or as part of their play. In reception children make good progress when writing skills are clearly modelled for them and they are encouraged to write independently and apply their knowledge of sounds. However, planning in reception does not clearly support the introduction of a literacy session or support progression in children's learning in communication,

language and literacy. Observations of children's individual reading skills are not used effectively to support their next stage in learning. Insufficient attention is given to developing children's communication skills throughout the Foundation Stage. In the nursery children readily engage in small group discussion but limited use is made of questioning to extend their use of language. The progress made in communication, language and literacy is variable across the Foundation Stage.

80. Mathematical development

Children make sound progress in developing their mathematical understanding in nursery. Good use is made of routines to provide opportunities for children to count and solve problems. Some children are able to work out how many children are present each day and all children enjoy counting the cups at snack time. Games are used well to develop mathematical understanding in meaningful contexts and children talked about needing 'one more go'. They can recognise the rectangles, squares, circles and triangles in the shapes of the name cards used for snack time. Sometimes opportunities to develop mathematics through play are missed. Planning for the daily mathematics session in reception does not support the learning in the different parts of the lesson and work is not well matched to the needs of children of different levels of ability. Work is consequently either too difficult or too easy for some children and they therefore make limited progress.

81. Knowledge and understanding of the world.

In the nursery the children are developing their use of a range of tools to roll out and cut playdough. Cooking activities are used to develop children's interest in what happens to materials but the same activities are planned for nursery and reception children and therefore do not extend the learning of the older children. During snack time children readily talk about their families and experiences such as firework events. These opportunities are not always used well to extend their knowledge. Fewer opportunities to support this aspect of learning are provided through play activities such as through the use of construction toys. The range of resources available to encourage children to explore and investigate, including sand and water play, are poor in the nursery and reception. Limited progress was observed in this aspect of development.

82. Physical Development

There are well planned opportunities for promoting physical development through PE lessons. The children in the nursery gained enormous pleasure from joining in an 'aerobic' style warming up session and were beginning to coordinate their movements well to music. They copied the movements demonstrated by the staff and showed creativity in the way they tried out different ways to move up, over and along the apparatus. Outdoor sessions are used regularly for children to use small apparatus and a range of wheeled vehicles. The development of skills is less focused in these sessions and is not supported by planning. Opportunities for physical development were not observed in reception during the inspection.

83. Creative Development

Children in the nursery use paint to make their own pictures but show limited exploration of shape, colour and form and little adult support was provided for these activities. The displays in the nursery and reception show children are given opportunities to use collage materials but these are very controlled by the adults and provide little opportunity for creative expression. Musical instruments are not always available in the nursery and no music or singing sessions were observed during the inspection. A limited number of children engaged in imaginative play in the role-play area and this was not supported by adults. As a result children make limited progress in creative development.

84. **ENGLISH**

- Standards in English closely match the national average with 81 per cent of pupils reaching the expected level 2 in reading and 90 per cent in writing in the statutory tests for 2000. This means that the lower and average-attaining pupils have made good progress overall and inspection evidence suggests that this trend is set to continue. However, the numbers of pupils reaching level 3 in reading remains well below the average in comparison with similar schools. Standards of speaking and listening are average. Girls consistently out-perform boys in all aspects of the 2000 results but this reflects the national picture and is not significantly worse at Maidstone Infants. Overall this year's results represent good progress since 1999 when far fewer pupils reached the expected level 2.
85. The school has effectively implemented the National Literacy Strategy and adapted it to suit the needs of the pupils. This is beginning to make a positive impact on pupils' performance. Guided reading and writing and the effective use of teacher assessments to guide teaching are areas for further improvement. Classroom assistants are well deployed and play a major role in raising standards, particularly through enabling the lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs to succeed. Volunteers, such as British Telecommunication friends, and parent helpers also contribute effectively in lessons because they are well deployed by teaching staff.
86. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with expected levels for seven-year-olds. Many speak with confidence and listen very well to each other and to their teachers. In discussion they offer lots of ideas and suggestions in response to questions. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to extend pupils' language through talk in class discussions and collaborations when engaged in group activities.
87. Overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress in learning to read through the school. The exceptions are the higher-attaining pupils who are not reaching level 3. In reception, pupils enjoy reading and are well supported at home. Higher-attaining pupils read aloud with expression and are able to talk about what they are reading. They are developing a good sight vocabulary using structured lists of words. In Year 1 they continue to enjoy reading and are learning ways to decode words. They remain well supported at home. They are beginning to understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and know that the library is colour coded as a way of organising the books. The lower-attaining pupils are developing self-confidence. Pupils in Year 2 recognise many words on sight; they match sounds to individual letters or familiar groups of letters (e.g. sh), but they are not proficient in blending the sounds together to read new words. Some pupils rely over-much on picture clues and few are able to use the clues within a sentence to accurately predict what the word might be. Pupils lack the experience of using books for information and do not use their knowledge of the alphabet to use an index. The school plans to improve this aspect of reading by developing information retrieval skills in literacy lessons with practical work in the library. Pupils also lack the confidence to express preferences; very few could talk about a favourite author or book. This prevents them from reaching higher levels. Most pupils are heard to read at home but many parents do not write in the home-school reading records so the dialogue between school and home is lost.
88. Standards of writing are satisfactory throughout the school and most pupils make sound progress. Pupils write about many things in different ways, including lists of healthy foods, accounts of visits, poems, labels, captions and recording observations, for example, in science. In Year 2, they form most of their letters correctly and some pupils are beginning to write in a joined style. Work in their books is well presented and neat. Most pupils are able to write in simple, grammatically correct sentences, often punctuated with full stops and capital letters. Much of the writing shows enthusiasm and flair, such as that found in the firework poems in Year 2 and the

writing about a recent visit to Orford. There are good examples of pupils using and improving their writing in other subject areas, such as writing about the 'sixties as part of a history project in Year 1. Standards of spelling are satisfactory and pupils spell familiar, monosyllabic words correctly. They often make phonetically plausible attempts at other, longer words but they are less secure with knowing how to spell words where two or three letters make one sound. The target setting procedures for individual pupils in Year 2 make an important contribution to raising standards in writing.

89. Pupils' attitudes to English are at least good, and sometimes excellent. They settle well, listen attentively and work productively. They remain focussed over a long period, with evident enjoyment, and often work independently. They enjoy reading. For example, there was a real buzz in the library when a Year 1 class visited to change their books and much animated discussion as adults and pupils enjoyed the experience of sharing books. In a story session in the ASC pupils responded enthusiastically when taking part in the telling of an animal story.
90. The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory and in more than a third of lessons it is good or very good. Teachers are well prepared which means that pupils are presented with well designed experiences. Teachers are mindful of what pupils enjoy and often choose big books which are lively and fun. The target setting system that is in place for writing provides a useful starting point for developing the use of more precise teacher assessments to plan the next steps for the class, groups or individuals. Teachers read aloud effectively and communicate their obvious enjoyment of reading to the pupils. Where this happens well, pupils listen carefully and read along expressively with the teacher. Sometimes teachers re-read or discuss passages and this helps the less confident readers to understand the text and join in with the class reading. In the best lessons, teachers take every opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate how to use the full range of reading cues. Teachers use questions well to involve pupils in a discussion in group reading and writing. This is most effective when pupils have time to respond fully or when the teacher encourages them to explain their answers. The effective use of teaching aids, such as sound cards in Year 1, means that pupils are motivated to learn. Good management of pupils' behaviour and good organisation mean that little time is wasted during changes of activity or movement from the carpet to their independent or group activities. The deployment of classroom assistants and helpers in lessons is a strength. They contribute well in whole class activities by helping less confident pupils and effectively leading groups or supporting individuals in group time.
91. Less successful aspects of teaching are evident in group time, where teachers do not use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to plan tasks which challenge the more able pupils or which help them to use the skills that they are learning.
92. The subject is managed enthusiastically and well by the literacy coordinator. Along with other staff and local education authority personnel, the literacy coordinator has monitored teaching of literacy across the school, as well as producing an audit and looking at writing samples. These activities are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that all pupils receive a consistent experience of guided reading and writing. The strengths of the provision include good teamwork and the introduction of target setting. Improvements since the last inspection, including better planning and organisation and use of shared reading, are attributable to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. The provision of resources has improved greatly since the last inspection when books were found to be in relatively short supply. The coordinator has remedied this situation effectively, ensuring that there is a plentiful supply of big books, group readers and that each class has its own collection of good quality fiction. The school is aware of the need to look at the balance of fiction and non-fiction in the resources for group reading.

93. **MATHEMATICS**

Pupils' overall attainment in mathematics in the national assessments in 2000 was well below average at the end of Key Stage 1. When compared with schools with similar backgrounds, the attainment was also well below average. The pattern of attainment over recent years has been well below the national average. However, there has been a recent improvement in the proportion of children attaining level 2 and it is now in line with the national average. The poor comparisons of the school's performance with all schools nationally and similar schools are clearly attributable to the smaller number of children attaining level 3. However, it is encouraging that when the results are set against the baseline assessments when the pupils started school, they are found to have made more progress than the County average.

94. Standards in mathematics are average. In the lessons seen during the inspection the pupils made satisfactory progress. In Year 2 pupils are making good progress in counting in twos and tens. They can explain the different ways they would solve multiplication problems. They correctly work out multiples of 50 and apply multiplication and addition to number problems involving money. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing a sound understanding of the number system and they can order numbers and investigate number patterns. More able pupils are beginning to understand the 'X' notation and explain what this means using a range of mathematical language. However, for some children the notation is introduced before they have demonstrated a clear understanding of the mathematical processes involved and, as a result, this leads to some confusion. Less able pupils make good progress when they are able to explore and demonstrate their understanding using number cards and games. They are able to identify which numbers are missing in a sequence of tens from ten to 90. Pupils in Year 2 understand and can use Carroll and Venn diagrams. Pupils in the ASC make good progress and cover a good range of work. They are able to count on and back, and work out simple addition and subtraction problems.
95. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall and often good or very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and there are clear indications that this is beginning to have a beneficial impact on standards. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established in Key Stage 1 and teachers feel that the strategy has helped them to improve their teaching. Good progress has been made in planning and this has been supported by the recent introduction of a commercial mathematics scheme. This is helping the staff to develop a wider range of teaching strategies. Teachers use assessments at the end of each term or year to help to group the pupils according to their learning needs. This includes some grouping by ability for specific lessons in Year 2. As yet there is no clear evidence of the impact of this grouping on pupils' learning. In the best lessons teachers adapted their teaching as a result of their observations of the pupils and they used the errors made by the pupils to help take their learning forward. However, in other lessons teachers do not use questions sufficiently to probe pupils' understanding and some misconceptions went undetected. Teachers' plan together to ensure that pupils in the same year group have the same mathematical opportunities and this also results in more consistency in teaching. Within lessons work is organised to match the needs of different groups of learners but work samples show that children of different abilities had covered a similar range of work. The more able children are not covering enough work at a sufficiently challenging level.
96. Teachers show enthusiasm for the mental and oral part of each mathematics lesson and the use of active learning styles ensures that all children are involved. In some lessons there was a lively pace and teachers gradually increased the challenge of the mental mathematics questions. This meant that children of all levels of ability were suitably challenged. In other lessons the pace was rather slow and children were not getting sufficient practice in the quick recall of number facts. Generally, teachers are good at showing how to solve mathematical problems and this enables pupils to work independently. However, teachers do not always help children to use the range of

mathematical language associated with a topic and this leads to some confusion in children's learning. Expectations are not always sufficiently high for the more able pupils and teachers do not use questions enough to explore and challenge their understanding and thinking. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on oral and practical methods of learning but there are insufficient opportunities for children to record mathematics in their own way.

97. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons, showing a high level of interest and commitment. They enjoy playing mathematical games and cooperate well together. So much so that, on occasion, they persist with work even when they are unsure about what they should do.
98. The subject leader in mathematics was absent during the inspection. Some monitoring of the subject has taken place but this has not resulted in any clear recommendations for further improvement. There has been some improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection and all lessons were well managed. However, there has been insufficient progress in providing more challenge for the more able pupils.
99. **SCIENCE**
Teacher assessment data for the past two years shows that standards achieved by the lower and average ability pupils were close to the performance of all schools nationally and similar schools. However, the attainment of the more able pupils is well below the levels attained by schools in both categories. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are achieving standards which are average overall. This is similar to the position at the last inspection except that it is evident now that pupils who are capable of achieving at level 3 in science are not doing so.
100. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils make sound progress in developing their skills of scientific enquiry. They successfully undertake investigations, for example into magnetism and how ice changes to water as it warms up. They are making sound progress in learning how to observe carefully and record their findings systematically. A good example was seen in Year 1 when pupils thoughtfully handled a variety of materials before choosing adjectives to accurately describe them, such as 'smooth', 'scrunchy' and 'soft'. In Year 2 pupils understand that scientific investigation involves making repeated observations to monitor the changes taking place over time. They are developing a secure understanding of what a fair test involves and they are becoming increasingly aware of why it is important. Pupils recognise and describe similarities and differences in materials and they have a good understanding of how materials are changed by cooling and heating. However, the higher-attaining pupils are not provided with the type of experiences which will equip them to achieve level 3 by the time they leave the school. A minor weakness is the limited use of computers to record evidence and to research information.
101. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and often good. In the best teaching pupils' scientific thinking and understanding was effectively extended through questioning which caused them to consider carefully what they were seeing, feeling and noting. Teachers share the excitement of learning science with the pupils. For example, when Year 1 pupils animatedly explored which materials are attracted to magnets the teacher appeared equally surprised and interested. Pupils' ideas and suggestions are equally valued and used skilfully to develop deeper understanding. Teachers have sound knowledge of the subject; they take care to highlight key vocabulary and to give good emphasis to scientific terms.
102. Pupils eagerly take part in practical investigations. The younger pupils express delight in their discoveries. When the introduction to a lesson is over-extended some pupils find it difficult to maintain their interest.

103. The subject leader provides clear direction for the subject and this is having a positive impact upon how pupils are learning science. Analysis of the 2000 teacher assessment data has alerted the subject leader to the need to review the planned curriculum so that the more able pupils are provided with the opportunities they need to achieve higher standards. The curriculum is well organised and this assists the teachers in planning units of work. The science development plan properly identifies the need to substantially increase the use of ICT within science.
104. **ART AND DESIGN**
Standards in art and design are good. Pupils make good progress in developing their basic skills, particularly in painting and printmaking through experiencing and using a good range of materials and processes. Pupils in Year 2 combine washes and brushstrokes to create strong images in the style of Van Gogh. Line drawings, in pen, of the school's musical instruments indicate good development of observational and drawing skills. Displayed work in Year 1 show good standards of painting. Pupils are learning to mix paints to make other colours and to control brushes to make a variety of marks. For example, pupils carefully study the shapes, colours and patterns of autumn leaves to make good quality paintings. They create vivid images of bonfire night with different media, including glitter, and they look closely at the patterns, colours and designs of wallpaper samples to develop a good understanding of the ways that blended colours and shapes can be repeated to build up attractive effects. Pastel drawings of autumn fruits show good observational skills and careful merging of colours to create rich pictures. Textiles and plastics are woven through large wire mesh to create bold, energetic designs. Good progress has been made with raising the standard of art throughout the school since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to vary from very good to less than satisfactory.
105. Pupils make good progress throughout the school with learning to use a broad range of printmaking techniques to create lively images. The techniques include press prints, mono prints and creating patterns using carrots, potatoes and onions. Displayed work shows good development so that older pupils are developing greater control of the printing process; they align their prints carefully to create repeat patterns.
106. Pupils are confident in their approach to art. They set about the activities eagerly and talk enthusiastically about what they are learning. Teachers make sure that the whole class is clear about what they are learning and provide good support. They actively encourage and value individuality and idiosyncrasy. Basic skills are well taught and adult support is very well deployed to ensure that all pupils have every opportunity to experience success.
107. Information and communication technology is very effectively used in art and design. Pupils' design in the style of Mondrian by drawing lines and filling with similar colours to those favoured by the artist. They successfully explore abstract effects using brush and spray tools to create dynamic images in the manner of the American expressionist artist, Jackson Pollock.
108. The subject leader provides strong and effective leadership for art. A well designed curriculum has been developed since the last inspection to provide a clear structured programme of basic skills. Areas for further development are clearly identified; further modification is planned to take full account of the recently published Qualifications and Curriculum Authority scheme of work. Resources are well matched to the curriculum and good use has been made of the advice and support of the local education advisor for art. The curriculum has been enriched by an artist in residence who worked with all pupils to create an attractive, large panel which is prominently displayed in the hall. Art and design makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' cultural awareness. At present there are limited opportunities for imaginative expression. This is a recognised area for improvement.

109. Artwork is prominently displayed to celebrate pupils' achievements throughout the school, in the entrance area, classes, corridors and hall. This makes a very positive contribution to the quality of the learning environment. It also communicates to pupils that their work is highly valued. However, there is inconsistency in the use of display to extend pupils understanding of art and design. At best, displays give clear information about how the work has been made and involve the pupils in thinking about what they are seeing.

110. **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

It was possible to see only one design and technology lesson during the period of inspection. Examples of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and teachers' planning documents indicate that standards are average. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have experienced a good range of activities including textiles, food technology and structures. By the time they are seven pupils know how to join materials and components in a variety of ways, to use simple tools safely. They understand that design is a process and structures can be made with a wide range of materials. It was not possible to evaluate pupils understanding of mechanisms since the planned units of work had not been taught at the time of the inspection.

111. Displayed work in Year 2 shows that pupils are learning to stitch fabric to join two parts of a pattern and to use computer design effectively when developing their ideas for 'Joseph's Technicolor Raincoat'. At Year 1 pupils are making good progress in developing their understanding of what makes a structure stable.

112. In the lesson seen the pupils showed very positive disposition to designing and making. All pupils confidently constructed models using a good variety of construction kits. They readily modified their designs and were proud of their achievements. Although questioning is successful in consolidating pupils' understanding, it is less effective in developing pupils capacity to talk about what works well in their model and to express a response to other's work. The teaching successfully created a climate in which the pupils felt encouraged to explore their own ideas. Good emphasis was given to key vocabulary and pupils' designs were highly valued. Planning clearly identifies what the pupils will learn and the sharing of the learning objective with the pupils at start of design and technology lessons is having a positive impact upon their learning.

113. Good support is provided to colleagues by the subject leader on what to teach and how to interpret the schemes of work. However, the subject leader does not have a clear grasp of standards or the quality of teaching and learning in design and technology.

114. **GEOGRAPHY**

It was not possible to see geography being taught during the period of inspection. However, a discussion with pupils about their studies was undertaken and their workbooks were analysed. In addition, the school's documentation and resources were examined and the subject leader for geography explained the recent steps taken to improve the school's provision for geography.

115. By the age of seven standards in geography are average. Pupils know about some of the basic features of the places they have studied and they can offer opinions about different kinds of environment. They know, for example, what kinds of places Felixstowe and Thornham are. Pupils are able to describe the particular features in these places, which have been developed over time by people. Their knowledge of physical features is less well developed.

116. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their field visit to Thornham and the storybooks used to introduce them to far away places. They show their workbooks with pride and

listen well to each other's contributions, helping their friends to remember key points and commenting positively on good work well done. Pupils are developing a worldwide awareness through, for instance, stories of the travels of "Barnaby Bear" and the school's sponsorship of Aleisha, a young student overseas.

117. As with history, pupils' work on their topics is extensive and, although they write at length, they are not taught effectively how to organise their writing. Teachers do not yet make sufficient use of assessment information to extend the higher attaining pupils. In addition, feedback to the range of pupils through marking is not precise and as a result, pupils and parents are given insufficient information about next steps for improvement.
118. Teaching plans have been revised recently. They are well organised and follow national and local guidance. A clear policy is in place to guide the work of staff. Since the last inspection, satisfactory improvement has been achieved. The subject leader has prepared the groundwork for further improvements but has not, as yet, completed the necessary evaluation to identify what needs to be done next.
119. **HISTORY**
History was not taught during the week of inspection. However, a study of Orford Castle has recently been completed and so a discussion with pupils about their topic was undertaken and their workbooks were analysed. In addition, the subject leader for history explained the approaches to leading the subject and the school's documentation and resources were examined.
120. Standards achieved in history are average. By the age of seven, pupils speak knowledgeably about their studies. They are able to talk about King Henry II and his enemy at Framlingham Castle. They understand that the purpose of a medieval castle was defence and that the castle's keep was the safest place when under attack. They know about the difficulties of living in a castle in medieval times, describing, for example, the features of a spiral staircase and draughty rooms. They are able to explain why domestic life in a castle was so very different to today. They are able to describe some of the key features that were different then, noting, in particular, technological changes affecting cooking methods and food preparation. Pupils know of other important differences, understanding that servants did the menial work whilst the rich people enjoyed the feast. Pupils know that sources of information are important in finding out about life in the past. They know, for example, that the castle itself is an important source of information. They also know that materials such as tapestries provide important clues about the past. There are the same strengths and weaknesses in written work as for geography.
121. Pupils clearly enjoy their work in history. They speak enthusiastically about their field visit to the castle and show appropriate humour when discussing medieval practices related to personal hygiene. They show their workbooks with pride and talk about the effort given to completing extended pieces of writing. They listen well to each other's contributions, helping their friends to remember key points and complementing good work.
122. Teaching plans are very well organised. National and local guidance has been used and adapted to suit the school's own preferences. The clear policy now in place to guide the work of staff reflects the sound work begun recently.

123. **INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Standards in ICT are average. The subject leader is providing good leadership in the subject and this is having a positive impact upon the progress pupils are making. By the time they leave school pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age. Pupils are successfully developing a firm foundation of basic skills. They develop their knowledge, skills and understanding by using a good range of ICT tools, including word processing, control and data handling. In Year 1 pupils use a mouse with confidence to click and drag images from one window to another, for instance, to construct a scene with characters. Higher-attaining pupils are making good progress in learning to save and retrieve stored information. In Year 2 pupils use the keyboard with increasing confidence to write and edit text and to represent and explore data in mathematics. Pupils achieve particularly well in graphic work. They developed designs for their design and technology project on 'Joseph's Coat' and created lively images in the style of Mondrian. Younger pupils learn to select and in-fill colours within outlines of pictures or patterns. All pupils have regular opportunities to use ICT to develop their skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

124. No formal ICT lessons were seen during the period of inspection. Teachers use computers for lessons in other subjects. Planning clearly identifies what pupils will learn. Pupils enjoy ICT. They show a very good attitude to working on the computer; they share well, taking it in turns to use the mouse.
125. Resources are generally well organised, in good condition and efficiently used. An identified weakness is the lack of software to support teaching and learning in science. This weakness was highlighted in the last report and there has been insufficient progress with addressing it. Otherwise, software is well matched to the planned curriculum.
126. Effective support is given to all teachers to ensure that medium planning includes opportunities for specific learning to be integrated. The subject leader has organised training to develop colleagues' confidence and competence and has sensitively guided those teachers who have found the subject difficult to assimilate into their practice. There is a well designed development plan which includes the further improvement of hardware and software, training for teachers and improved emphasis on communication.
127. **MUSIC**
Music plays an important part in the life of the school and is a notable strength. It is there at register times when a song is used to close one activity and start another; it is there to thank helpers and visitors to the school; it is there when pupils enter and leave the hall for assembly; and it is there in the extra-curricular activities of the school as the beat which accompanies the dance club and in the sound of a huge recorder ensemble.
128. Pupils enjoy music making at Maidstone Infants. They achieve very good standards. Singing is tuneful; enthusiastic but controlled. The numbers of pupils taking part in recorder lessons means that many pupils have access to more specialist instrumental teaching than would be normal for pupils of this age.
129. In lessons pupils handle instruments well. They are able to distinguish between playing loudly and softly when responding to a conductor. Most can copy a rhythm clapped by the teacher and keep a steady pulse. In Year 2 pupils listen intensively and identify a variety of instruments (or objects) played out of sight.
130. Pupils behave well in lessons because they are managed well and the pace is good. There is a constant expectation that all will have the opportunity to conduct, play an instrument or take a leading role in some way. This increases motivation and adds to the learning experience. Pupils respond well to these opportunities to take responsibility. It has a positive effect on their personal development and self-esteem

in particular. In a music lesson in the hall pupils from the ASC swelled with pride when they were chosen to play an instrument at the front.

131. Teaching is good and, on occasion, excellent. In all lessons observed the pace was good or better and pupils were actively involved in music-making right from the start. The brisk pace ensures that no time is wasted and that pupils maintain their interest and involvement throughout. Teachers are well supported by a detailed scheme of work which ensures that they have good subject knowledge, and they have high expectations as to what the pupils will achieve. Opportunities are taken to develop pupils' language. In the Year 1/2 class, the teacher provides a clear commentary which enables the pupils to discriminate between subtle differences in sound qualities.
132. The provision of extra-curricular activities in music is good. The twice-weekly recorder sessions and dance club are well attended and well taught. The school works closely with neighbouring schools and takes an active part in locally arranged musical events, as well as staging its own productions and concerts. In addition, there is a range of visitors to the school, such as the Salvation Army band, which further enriches the musical life of the school.
133. The subject is enthusiastically led by the music coordinator who has the active support of the headteacher, herself a keen musician. Over the years, the coordinator has refined and developed a scheme of work for music which ensures that all the staff, including non-specialists, are well supported. Furthermore, it ensures that the teaching of music is consistently good. Resources for music have been gradually upgraded and added to and the school is now well resourced. Future plans for music include the continuing monitoring and development of the subject and further incorporation of music representing many different cultures. Overall, there has been good progress since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was inconsistent and some teachers lacked the confidence to teach the subject well.
134. **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Only gymnastics and games lessons were observed during the inspection. The children's attainment in these was always satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils in Year 1 make satisfactory progress in developing a sequence of movements and use their observations of each other to improve their own skills. Some pupils show high levels of skill in throwing and catching balls and beanbags with speed and accuracy. In Years 1 and 2 they are beginning to coordinate their actions in simple games. Pupils are developing awareness of the effect of exercise on their bodies and feel their hearts beating at the end of a session.
135. Teaching in PE is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons are well organised and supported by clear planning. Pupils achieve higher levels of skill in lessons in which there is a lively pace and teachers provide a clear demonstration of the skills required. In these lessons teachers also gradually increase the challenge for the pupils and set time limits for activities. When teachers provide opportunities for the pupils to observe and describe each other's performance they are better able to evaluate and improve their own performance. Sometimes lack of clarity in the teacher's instructions results in some confusion in the activities.
136. Pupils show enthusiasm for PE and enjoy the exercise. They show real pleasure in improving their own performance. In group activities they cooperate well and show awareness of each other. They occasionally lose interest and concentration when activities are not explained clearly enough or when the lesson lacks pace and challenge.
137. The subject leader for PE provides sound leadership and direction for the development of the subject. Recent staff development on the use of the Top Play scheme has contributed to the quality of planning and teaching and staff are enthusiastic about the

impact on the pupils' learning. The draft scheme of work provides good support for progression in learning throughout the school.

138. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It was not possible to observe religious education lessons taught by teachers during the week of inspection. However, a study of baptism was taking place, led by the local vicar and this was observed. Following this a discussion with pupils about their topic work was undertaken. Pupils' workbooks were analysed. In addition, the subject leader for RE explained how RE is approached and the school's documentation and resources were examined.

139. Standards achieved in RE are in line to meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 2 speak knowledgeably about their study of baptism, explaining that it is a special service to welcome a new member into the church family. They know that godparents make special promises on behalf of a baby. They can associate special symbols, artefacts and activities with Christian celebrations and some make links to their personal experiences, talking confidently when describing their work.
140. Pupils show positive attitudes to the adults helping them to understand ideas about religion. They ask interesting questions and make sensible responses to the experiences offered in school. Pupils take pride in being selected to role-play key parts of the service. The adult team works very well together, demonstrating key ideas such as ways to welcome people. The school has a very inclusive approach and enables pupils with learning disabilities to share these experiences. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Spiritual development is particularly well supported through the experiences provided by the school.
141. The school's provision for the teaching of RE is satisfactory and good progress has been made since its last inspection, particularly through the support for pupils' personal development. Planning for each topic is thorough and fully meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Teachers are well supported by the resources available for each planned study. Pupils visit the local church as part of their studies and the vicar is a regular and valuable contributor.