

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gillingham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118431

Headteacher: Mr N Fiddaman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Eira Gill
17766

Dates of inspection: 25 – 29 September 2000

Inspection number: 225026

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodlands Road Gillingham Medway
Postcode:	ME7 2DU
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Lawrence
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Eira Gill 17766	Registered inspector	Mathematics Religious education Design and technology History Equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Norma Ball 09391	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes & personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Alison Pangbourne 23818	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Children under five	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
Anne Parker 18352	Team inspector	English Geography Music Physical education Special educational needs Nurture Unit	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is smaller than the average size of primary school with 166 girls and boys on roll. This represents a decrease of 34 pupils since the school's last inspection. During the last academic school year 31 pupils joined the school other than at the usual time of admissions and 24 left. This is a high percentage of mobility. More than half of the pupils on roll have been identified as having special educational needs which is well above the national average and eight pupils have a statement of special educational need which is a high proportion of the number on roll. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is below average and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. Approximately half of the pupils are entitled to a free school meal, which is well above average. The school is situated in an area of social and economic deprivation and, in January, was included in the Gillingham Education Action Zone. Children under five are admitted in September and January and their attainment on entry is well below average. The school has a nurture unit for ten children where their special educational needs are given a high priority of care.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school and no longer has serious weaknesses. The effective quality of leadership and management and the overall good teaching which the pupils receive has resulted in improved standards overall. Standards in science and information and communication technology have improved significantly since the last inspection. The pupils have very good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in science and information and communication technology have improved significantly in Key Stage 2 because provision is now good.
- The excellent provision of extra-curricular activities before school, at lunchtime, after school and on Saturday morning has a positive impact on the very good attitudes and good behaviour of the pupils.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they make good progress.
- The provision of the Nurture Unit for pupils with special educational needs and behavioural problems is very good.
- The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and attendance are very good and have resulted in improved attendance.
- The commitment by all staff to improve the school is very strong and, as a result, standards are improving.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in English and mathematics, particularly in the opening sessions of the lessons in Key Stage 2, to raise attainment.
- The curriculum for the children in the foundation stage should be given more priority and planned to meet the children's needs in order to raise their achievement.
- Lesson planning should have a sharper focus on the needs of different groups of pupils so that all pupils make good progress within lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998, and was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since then, it has made a good improvement and has a similar capacity to improve. The key issues for action identified by that inspection have, overall, been well addressed, for example, there have been significant improvements in the standards in science and information and communication technology. The quality of teaching has improved and co-ordination of subjects is now good. Regular monitoring of teaching and subject development takes place resulting in a better quality of teaching.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E*	E	E*	E*
Mathematics	E	E	E*	E*
Science	E*	E*	E*	E*

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

The information shows that standards in the three subjects in 1999 were very low in comparison with all schools and in the lowest 5 per cent of schools. In 1999 approximately 70 per cent of the year group were identified as having special educational needs, which had a significant effect on the results. The school's trends in results are broadly in line with those nationally. The school has been very energetic in taking steps to improve these results and has set challenging targets. As a result, in the year 2000 more pupils reached the expected levels and, in science, a significant number of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. The findings of the inspection agree with these results and judge standards in English and mathematics, geography, history, music and religious education to be below expectations compared with all schools. Standards in science, art, information and communication technology and physical education are in line with expectations. No judgement was made on standards in design and technology in Key Stage 2 because there was not enough evidence. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education are in line with expectations while standards in all other subjects are below those expected. The standards reached by children under five are well below expectations in all areas of learning with the exception of physical development where their attainment is below expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good gains in their achievement overall from a very low starting point on entry to the school. In Key Stage 2, pupils are achieving appropriately.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils listen attentively and show great enthusiasm to learn when teaching is good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; all the adults in school work hard to reinforce good behaviour and the pupils respond well and show a clear understanding of what is expected.
Personal development and relationships	Good; very good relationships between pupils and staff. Adults are good role models and show the pupils every courtesy.
Attendance	Satisfactory; although the percentages are below the national averages, they do represent an improvement in attendance over previous years.

The pupils' very good attitudes, their enthusiasm for school together with the very good relationships throughout the school are significant factors in promoting their learning. Older pupils willingly look after the younger pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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

Ninety-eight per cent of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better, 17 per cent very good or better and two per cent was unsatisfactory. The teaching of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2. Well-planned activities in Key Stage 1 ensure that all pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs. Good teaching of the literacy hour in Year 4 is exemplified by high expectations, quick-fire questioning and no time wasted which results in good concentration and high motivation by the pupils. A good pace, sound planning and skilled questioning is evident in the numeracy hour in the middle years of Key Stage 2 where good progress is made by pupils in their improved understanding and numeracy skills. These teaching skills are not so obvious in other year groups where planning does not always meet the needs of all pupils. This leads to a slowing down of progress for some pupils within lessons. Very good subject knowledge in science leads to high quality teaching for the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2, which has an impact on the pupils' very good rate of learning. The achievement of pupils is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; fulfils statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects, including religious education and collective worship. Provision for health, drugs and sex education is good. The curriculum for children under five is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is planned mainly through National Curriculum subjects rather than the recently introduced early learning goals. This leads to weaknesses in the provision for purposeful play and physical development. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; procedures for identifying pupils are effective, they have full access to the school's curriculum and are well supported. They make good progress towards their targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; spiritual development is sound while moral, social and cultural development is good. This has a positive impact on the pupils' very good attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; this is a strength of the school. Clear evidence of high commitment to pastoral care and arrangements for child protection are very good. The initiatives to accommodate pupils before school for breakfast and after school for many extra activities are excellent. The two Counsellors working with pupils with identified needs and the Nurture Unit are both very valuable aspects of the school's provision. Procedures for monitoring attendance are excellent.

The school works hard to maintain good links with the parents and information about the school that is sent home is good. However, the curriculum events, such as the numeracy and science meetings, have been poorly supported by parents. Parents are warmly welcomed into the school for social occasions and the breakfast club is also open to parents when the school encourages a family atmosphere.

WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher is very energetic and a very good role-model for the staff and the pupils. He has been most persistent in putting into place many initiatives, such as the breakfast and Saturday clubs, which have had a very positive effect on the pupils' attitudes to school and their learning. He is well supported by his senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound; the governing body work closely with the school and have fully supported the headteacher and staff in their plans to improve the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; the headteacher and senior staff have analysed the results of statutory tests for the last two years and identified specific weaknesses which have been addressed by a change of teaching methods and organisation of homework clubs.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school uses its resources well to support the priorities in the school development plan and to raise standards. The school is using the additional funding available from the Gillingham Partnership Education Action Zone to fund the initiatives mentioned above. These are having a significant impact on standards of attainment.

The leadership of the headteacher is very good and there is a good team spirit very evident in the school. The level of staffing is good and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Accommodation is good. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leadership and management of the school. The wide range of activities outside lessons. The way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Their children's behaviour is good. The significant improvements that have been made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents would like more information about their child's progress.

The inspection team wholeheartedly agrees with the very positive views expressed by the parents. However, the inspection found that the quality of information provided for parents is good, particularly that on pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The levels of pupils' attainments in the national tests, taken at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, show that standards are very low compared to all schools in reading, writing and mathematics and in the lowest five per cent of schools. Compared to similar schools, results in reading and mathematics are well below average and in writing, very low. Test results over the last three years show consistently well below average results. In the 1999 end of key stage assessments by teachers in science, standards were very low and very few pupils exceeded the expected level. The school's results in the most recent national tests, taken at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2000, show that more pupils have reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years but very few have achieved the higher grades. The end of key stage assessments by teachers in science in the year 2000 show considerable improvement although comparative figures are not yet available.
2. Pupils' attainments in the national tests, taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999, show that they were very low compared to the national average in English, mathematics and science and in the lowest five per cent compared to similar schools. The results in English and mathematics dropped from the previous two years and, in science, results continued an upward trend since 1996. Even though results for all three subjects were very low, nevertheless the school's trend is broadly in line with the national trend. The school has been very energetic in taking steps to improve these results by rigorous analysis of the pupils' results to discover specific weaknesses as well as organising homework clubs. As a result, in the Year 2000 more pupils reached the expected levels in English and mathematics but are still below average. In science, almost twice as many pupils reached the expected level and half of them exceeded this level. This is very good improvement.
3. The findings of the inspection are very similar to these results. Judgements are that attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 is below the national average. In Key Stage 2, attainment in English and mathematics is below the national average for the end of the key stage and, in science, attainment is in line with the national average.
4. Children enter the school with well below average standards in all the areas of learning with the exception of physical development where attainment is below average. A significant number of children start school with particularly poorly developed language skills. They make sound progress and attain as they should, firmly consolidating and broadening their understanding. By the time they leave the foundation stage, at the end of Year R, the majority of children have not yet achieved the early learning goals in any of the areas of learning. This is because many children start school with such poorly developed skills and a significant number has special educational needs.
5. In Key Stage 1, pupils are achieving well in English from a very low starting point on entry. They listen attentively but have difficulty expressing themselves clearly and their vocabulary is limited. However, during the inspection week, Year 2 pupils presented an assembly on their science work and showed that their progress in speaking is sound. Pupils do not have a wide range of strategies to help them to read unfamiliar words and their understanding of what they have read is not secure. Some higher attaining pupils know how to look for information in a non-fiction book. By the end of the key stage, pupils are still mixing upper and lower case letters and only a small number use interesting words to enliven their writing.
6. In all aspects of English, the achievements of pupils by eleven years are satisfactory. Although their listening skills are sound, their spoken language is below average and pupils have difficulty expressing their thoughts and opinions. The few higher attaining pupils can talk about the story line in their books and their obvious enjoyment, but their grasp of the plot is still developing. Their discussion about books generally shows a limited range of reading. The average attaining pupils are sometimes reading books that are too difficult and show that they do not use appropriate skills to find out what the words say. Their handwriting skills are underdeveloped and some pupils are still not joining their letters consistently. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been effective and standards have risen as a result.
7. In mathematics, in Year 2, the pupils' numeracy skills are limited. Although most of them try hard to solve problems in their heads, not many are successful and they have difficulty

discussing their work using mathematical vocabulary. Some pupils can spot which numbers are missing from the hundred square and a few can add on ten mentally to a two digit number. Pupils can recognise a square, a circle and a rectangle and a few pupils can recognise a cube. The effective implementation of the numeracy hour is having an effect on this group of pupils whose progress is good and the work provides a suitable challenge for the different levels of attainment. In Year 6, the few higher and average attaining pupils' knowledge of multiplication tables is sound. Several pupils have difficulty counting forwards and backwards in twos. Most pupils are insecure when working with equivalent fractions and their understanding of decimals is poor. Estimation skills using metres are sound. Pupils are making satisfactory progress and are using mathematical skills in geography and science where they measure distances travelled in their investigations and to record the measurements of bones graphically. The achievement of the pupils by the age of eleven in mathematics is satisfactory.

8. A good feature in science lessons is the emphasis placed on investigational and experimental work. Pupils in Year 1 are developing an understanding of their senses through the use of a 'feely' box and by Year 2, pupils show an understanding of materials and their properties in an assembly for the whole school. During an experiment when eggs are cooked in different ways, the pupils develop their vocabulary and are highly motivated to chat, watch, listen and learn! The achievement in science of these pupils is good. In Year 6, high standards are attained because of high expectations and a brisk pace that leads pupils into establishing hypotheses and ensuring the tests are fair. Pupils are given opportunities to be independent in science lessons and also encouraged to devise their own methods for recording. This has an impact on their progress and achievement, which is good. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection.
9. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with national expectations in both key stages, which is a significant improvement from the last inspection. Pupils are achieving well. Pupils have many opportunities to use the computers including lunchtimes and the clubs, which are organised after school each day. As a result, the level of their skills and knowledge in all strands of the curriculum has increased considerably. In both key stages, standards in religious education are below average and the young pupils in Year 2 find it difficult to understand the different aspects of Sikhism. In Year 6, although pupils have developed their knowledge about Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter, they have difficulty describing the more complex aspects of Christianity.
10. In art, in both key stages, standards meet those expected for their age and pupils' achievement is good and is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Not enough evidence was available to judge attainment in design and technology in Key Stage 2 but, in Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is in line with expected standards in joining two and three-dimensional objects. In geography and history, in both key stages, pupils' attainment is below expectation but their achievement is satisfactory. Although they respond to oral questions satisfactorily and enjoy finding information through information and communication technology, their lack of expressive language hinders their progress when they are asked to respond in writing. In music, standards are below those expected in both key stages and, in physical education, they are meeting expectations and achievement is good.
11. Pupils throughout the school with special educational needs make good progress. Most of the assistants are very skilled at supporting the pupils both individually and, in groups. On some occasions, the teachers do not provide the pupils with suitably adapted work to meet their needs and when this occurs, the assistants have difficulty guiding the pupils appropriately. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls or different groups of pupils, such as the higher attaining pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Overall pupils show a very positive attitude to school. In lessons they listen attentively and try to do their best even when engaged in routine and unchallenging tasks. However, when lessons are lively and stimulating pupils show very good enthusiasm and joy in their work. Overall, there is very good enthusiasm for school and pupils attitudes to learning have improved notably since the last inspection. In both key stages, but especially amongst older pupils, learning is

enhanced by the pupils' willingness to listen and concentrate. Younger pupils are gradually encouraged to develop good listening skills and remain on task. Most pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to learning. When working with a learning support assistant in the classroom or when given individual tuition, they persevere with their tasks. Children in the foundation stage enjoy coming to school because they know that they are valued. In their first weeks in school they have already settled happily. They show good attitudes to their work and behave well. Pupils can work well together in lessons and most show very good interest and involvement in their work. In a Year 5 class, for example, pupils worked very successfully in pairs in the computer suite throughout a lesson in which they all showed real enthusiasm. Pupils also listen attentively to the contributions made in lessons by others. For example, in a Key Stage 2 assembly, all pupils listened attentively and applauded warmly a violin solo by a Year 6 pupil. The very good attitudes of pupils and their interest in all they do are a special feature of the school.

13. Overall, the behaviour of pupils overall is good. All adults in the school work consistently to reinforce good behaviour and set clear guidelines for what is acceptable behaviour. In turn, pupils respond well to the staff and show a clear understanding of the good behaviour expected by the school. A few pupils can be challenging and find extended periods of concentration difficult. Generally, these pupils are well managed by staff with very good support from the headteacher. The vast majority of pupils show courtesy to each other and to staff and respect for the needs and feelings of others. In the class rules there is a clear reflection of what the pupils regard as important in terms of behaviour. Good behaviour is also evident in and around the school. At lunch and playtime pupils of different ages mix well and older pupils respond well to the encouragement given by the school for them to care for younger pupils. The good behaviour of pupils noted in the previous report has been sustained. There have been a high number of recent exclusions but this is limited to a very few pupils. Exclusions are mostly for short periods and pupils are carefully reintegrated into school on their return. Bullying and aggressive behaviour is not a feature of the school but a very few pupils can be aggressive and disruptive at times. The absence of aggressive, sexist and racist behaviour is good. Pupils are careful with property, both their own and the schools.
14. The personal development of pupils is good. Relationships are good and there are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils mix well in lessons and at play. All adults in the school provide good role models showing care and courtesy in their relationships with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to undertake responsibilities both in class and around the school. The prefects in Year 6 make a valuable contribution to the school and show a real pride in their role. In a Year 6 personal and social education lesson, pupils said they felt 'proud' to be prefects. The same pupils also explained their views on the responsibilities, both in terms of setting an example for others, and for doing responsible jobs like answering the telephone in the office during the lunch break. Within class, pupils are encouraged to extend their friendships by having a friend for the day, as in Year 2, and older pupils are paired with younger pupils on trips such as swimming and to help with reading. Such emphasis on sharing and caring promotes good personal development for pupils. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative and are warmly praised when they do so. For example, pupils are willing to set out play equipment at lunch-time and tidy things away in class without being asked to do so.
15. Pupils' awareness of others and respect is good and this is an area in which the school place a clear emphasis. Pupils listen to each other, show tolerance and respect for the needs of others. They mix well and join in games at playtime with easy friendliness. At the regular daily breakfast club the family atmosphere is a clear reflection of the emphasis on sharing and respecting the needs and choices of others.
16. Attendance is satisfactory at just over 92 per cent. Although this figure is below the national average of 94 per cent, it represents an improvement in attendance over previous years. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Registers are taken efficiently and attendance information is reported to parents. Punctuality to school is satisfactory. The school is visited regularly by the Education Welfare Officer who works closely with the school and parents to ensure good attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and 96 per cent of parents indicated in the questionnaire that teaching is good or very good. Across the school, the quality of teaching was judged as good or better in 63 per cent of lessons, and very good and, sometimes, excellent in 17 per cent of lessons. Thirty-five per cent of lessons were satisfactory and only one lesson was unsatisfactory. This represents an improvement on the findings of the school's last inspection when 13 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory.
18. Teaching is good overall for the children under five in the Foundation Stage and leads to sound learning. In the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and physical development teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. No teaching was observed in the area of creative development.
19. In Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in all subjects. Teaching is very good in the art lesson seen and very good in physical education. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding of how to teach young pupils is very evident particularly in their good questioning skills that help the pupils develop their expressive vocabulary. These skills result in pupils increasing their understanding and confidence and they make sound progress. Teaching of the basic skills is good and, sometimes, very good which furthers the pupils' understanding. The use of time and support staff is good and there is evidence of very effective liaison with assistants, which means that the pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
20. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall. Teaching is more variable in this key stage, with one excellent lesson in physical education and one unsatisfactory lesson in mathematics. Very good teaching was observed in the middle years of this key stage in English and mathematics and in science for the oldest pupils. Good teaching was observed in art and history, with satisfactory teaching in history overall and music. Lessons in geography and religious education were judged to be satisfactory. No lessons were observed in design and technology in Key Stage 2 and no judgement made on teaching in ICT. In the lesson in mathematics judged to be unsatisfactory, it was clear that planning did not take account of the rate of pupils' learning and most pupils floundered and made no progress. In the very good lessons, teachers' expectations of pupils moving forward in their learning are particularly high and this inspires the pupils and they make good progress. The methods teachers use vary in their effectiveness, particularly in the literacy and numeracy lessons. When teaching is good or very good, the opening sessions are interesting and exciting for the pupils with teachers explaining very clearly what is expected and shooting quick-fire questions at individual pupils. These teachers are skilled at varying their questioning so that all pupils are expected to answer and not just those who put up their hands. When teaching is satisfactory, the methods used in the opening sessions of English and mathematics are sometimes dull and do not inspire or challenge the pupils. The activities organised for the pupils in these lessons lack imagination and, as a result, pupils complete them with a lack of enthusiasm.
21. Teachers manage pupils well in practically all lessons and this is a good feature of the school that has an impact on the pupils' work rate and concentration. They give praise and encouragement appropriately to ensure a pleasant and purposeful atmosphere that encourages the good relationships that are evident. Although some teachers give pupils homework regularly, this is not consistent throughout the school. Teachers usually make sound use of informal, day-to-day assessments of pupils to ensure that the work they are given is suitable for their level of ability. Teachers make good use of resources to inspire pupils in their work in art, science and religious education. They have a good awareness of safety issues and encourage safe practice in science and in ICT.
22. Teachers usually provide appropriate tasks for pupils with special educational needs that are matched to their needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy. There are occasions, however, when low average and lower attaining pupils are given activities that they find difficult. Consequently, they struggle and do not make progress. The very good relationships that

teachers and assistants build with pupils and the gentle encouragement they give, enables the pupils to make the most of opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding. Good management and high expectations for behaviour reduces any disruption from pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to a minimum.

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

23. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is suitably broad and balanced and fulfils the statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects, and those for religious education and collective worship. Provision for health, drugs and sex education is good and is well addressed through the science curriculum and 'circle times'. A suitable balance of time has been allocated to most subjects with appropriate emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This is having a positive effect on standards in English and mathematics. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. In addition to a very wide range of activities such as netball, football, information and communication technology, drama, French, gardening, choir, computer, sewing and art clubs, the school also provides a breakfast club, a homework club and a Saturday club for older pupils. The Saturday club includes activities to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and the arts. These clubs have a positive impact on the standards attained as a significant number of pupils attend. They also contribute well to pupils' social development.
24. The curriculum for children in the foundation stage is unsatisfactory because it is planned in accordance with the National Curriculum programmes of study rather than on the areas of learning necessary for their development. This was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection and although the school is developing its curriculum for the early years as part of the Education Action Zone initiatives, it has not improved sufficiently in this area. Consequently, there are weaknesses in provision for purposeful play and physical development. There are insufficient opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning and, on occasions, children in Year R are offered tasks at too similar a level of challenge to those in Year 1 in the same class.
25. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The learning support assistants and the assistant special needs co-ordinator discuss progress towards targets regularly. Most targets are useful, quite specific and attainable within short periods of time. The school provides good equality of access to both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The way the school operates avoids stereotypical behaviour by gender, as girls and boys work together as equals in all aspects of school life.
26. The school is appropriately reviewing policies and schemes of work in many areas of the curriculum to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. The Education Action Zone is planning its own curriculum around national guidance to provide a similar curriculum for all its schools, including an emphasis on their own area. The curriculum is currently planned using national guidance for most areas of the curriculum. This guidance is appropriately developed into medium term plans that include clear learning objectives and skills to be taught. These planning sheets are also used to identify pupils who have understood the concept, those who have consolidated their skills and those who need further help. These sheets are passed on to the next teacher, ensuring that pupils develop their skills systematically and that there is no repetition of learning.
27. The school has successfully addressed most of the areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection. Although weaknesses remain in the planning of the curriculum for the very youngest children, provision for the arts has been improved with the resulting rise in standards. Improvements in provision for information and communication technology result in all strands of the curriculum being appropriately covered. The school has worked hard to improve its planning documents to ensure that lessons have clear objectives which are shared with the pupils. Co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science monitor the curriculum in their subjects, successfully addressing an issue from the previous inspection.

28. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are taught daily and the curriculum for English is further enhanced by daily opportunities for silent sustained reading times. This makes a positive contribution to improving standards in reading. The school has implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies appropriately. However, in most classes, particularly in Key Stage 2, teachers' understanding of how to use the many resources and strategies available in mathematics to motivate the pupils is underdeveloped. Consequently, mental arithmetic sessions at the start of the numeracy hour sometimes lack pace and teachers do not always use interesting resources to stimulate the pupils, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm to calculate at speed.
29. The school recognises the value of good community links particularly in the area of supporting and promoting pupils' personal development. The local police and fire service visit the school and the drugs awareness plan, developed by the police, is especially valued by the school. The extensive range of links with local agencies is also well used to support pupils' needs. The Education Welfare Officer provides very effective support in helping the school to improve attendance. Relationships with other institutions are good, especially those developed through the Education Action Zone. The school has good links with other local schools and also with the community through the music programme of the school.
30. Overall, the school's provision for personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has improved its provision since the previous inspection, particularly cultural development.
31. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. It appropriately raises pupils' awareness of themselves as individuals and their place in the school community. It is well supported through 'circle times' and through personal and social development, where pupils have the opportunity to discuss and share their feelings. For example, pupils in Year 4 made positive statements about another member of the class, using a 'talking stick' to create a special atmosphere where all pupils gave the speaker their full attention. At the end of the lesson, the teacher used a candle as a focus and pupils reflected quietly about something positive about themselves. Teaching of religious education and assemblies underpin spiritual development, although moments for reflection are sometimes missed; for example, marvelling at the music played in assemblies. The school has clear aims to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and give them insight into values and beliefs. Pupils demonstrate curiosity, awe and wonder in lessons such as science and history. For example, pupils in Year 2 were amazed to examine closely the membrane covering an egg yolk and at the texture on the inside of an egg shell. Pupils in Year 4 expressed their feelings in their empathetic writing about preparing for battle as a Celt. Pupils are given time to express their feelings in personal and social education lessons and this gives them meaningful opportunities to develop their expressive vocabulary.
32. The provision for moral development is good. Pupils are taught to be polite, considerate and respectful to others. Pupils discussed the school aims during an assembly, showing that they clearly understand what factors contribute to acceptable behaviour and the difference between right and wrong. All adults provide good role models for pupils. The school has good guidelines for behaviour and this is effective in promoting moral standards. As was identified in the previous inspection, the weekly celebration assembly continues to encourage moral development. Pupils receive a letter of commendation from the headteacher for their achievements and in recognition of good behaviour. This impacts positively on pupils' moral development and is valued by the pupils.
33. The school provides good opportunities for the development of pupils' social skills. Relationships between all members of the community are good and adults take every opportunity to develop the self-esteem and confidence of the pupils. In lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to work together either in pairs or small groups. Of particular note is the way in which pupils work together and help each other on the computers. Pupils are trusted to work independently in corridors and the courtyard and they respond very positively. For example, pupils in Year 6 undertook a science investigation in the courtyard sensibly with no need for intervention by the teacher. Older pupils undertake many tasks that help the school to run smoothly. They act as

prefects, prepare the hall for assembly and look after younger pupils. Social development is also fostered through the many clubs provided and through visits to places of interest.

34. There have been significant improvements in cultural development since the previous inspection, where there were few planned opportunities to develop cultural awareness. Provision is now good. Attractive displays throughout the school promote an understanding of other cultures and other faiths. Pupils are introduced to the works of a variety of artists such as Monet and Picasso. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' knowledge of local culture by providing a good range of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils visit the nearby cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, the local adventurous activities centre and museums. Visitors such as musicians, artists and story tellers further enrich the curriculum. Pupils are introduced to other cultures through first hand experience and this contributes very positively to their development. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 recently visited Paris, using 'Eurostar' and climbing the Eiffel Tower. This opportunity to visit another country gives pupils a good understanding of another culture and impacts positively on learning in many areas of the curriculum. The school has recognised that opportunities to help prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain are underdeveloped and is currently arranging a link with an inner London school with a high proportion of pupils from an ethnic heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The school provides a very caring environment in which all pupils are increasingly valued. The very good quality of care provided for pupils is a strength of the school. The school has maintained a clear commitment to pastoral care and satisfactory steps have been taken to address the safety issues noted in the previous inspection. The school's arrangements for child protection are very good. There is a clear policy for child protection introduced by the headteacher who is the designated person. Teaching staff show a positive commitment to their pastoral responsibilities. There are regular reviews of the school premises and the school gives a high priority to matters of health and safety. Through the Education Action Zone a number of significant initiatives have taken place in the school including the breakfast club to provide a nourishing start to the day for pupils and parents who wish to use the free service. The role of the Counsellors in working with children with identified needs and the Nurture Unit, where there is a high level of special care for pupils, are both very valuable aspects of the school's provision for pupils with identified needs.
36. The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are sound. There is a clear and helpful policy and assessment procedures are satisfactory with the information obtained used soundly in the planning of future work. Each class teacher completes record sheets of the progress pupils make in each subject of the curriculum and these are updated throughout the year. Evaluation comments are also made on short-term planning sheets to indicate which pupils find specific tasks more difficult than others, which informs the teachers' planning for the following week. The assessment of children under five is appropriate and used to group children according to their ability. As children move through the foundation stage, termly assessments are made of their progress and targets for improvement are set. The headteacher and co-ordinators analyse carefully the results of school and national tests, both on a year group and an individual basis. The staff take suitable action to rectify any weaknesses. For example, it was evident that the pupils lacked the vocabulary essential to have a reasonable attempt at the science national tests. Since this weakness was addressed, results have improved significantly.
37. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. The school has moved from an unsatisfactory attendance profile to one which is satisfactory, by using a firm and consistent approach to monitoring and follow up of poor attendance. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence and, if necessary, home visits are made. The school has a productive relationship with the education welfare officer who calls at the school on a regular basis. Monitoring of behaviour is good and the regular weekly behaviour notes kept by class teachers are especially valuable in monitoring poor behaviour and helping to promote improved behaviour. The behaviour policy is clear and consistently implemented in the school. Within classrooms pupils decide

their own rules and these reflect their own emphases and priorities. Oppressive behaviour and bullying does occur from time to time but staff act quickly and pupils are aware that such behaviour is unacceptable. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating such behaviour are good.

38. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Teachers develop a thorough knowledge of pupils within their care and notes made on a weekly basis of significant developments for pupils in any class provide a valuable body of knowledge for staff. Within the school all adults are alert to the needs of pupils and problems are identified quickly with effective measures put in place to support pupils. For example the death of a member of staff recently led to many pupils suffering the sadness of loss and immediate steps were taken to put in place counselling help for those who needed it.
39. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support within the school from teachers, support staff and pupils. The supportive atmosphere enables these pupils to cope with any difficult situations that may arise. The school seeks appropriate specialist support from external agencies and uses this effectively. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is monitored closely and assistants keep careful, useful notes of ongoing assessments. These are used to form targets for further improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The parents' view of the school is very good. The overall majority of parents make very positive comments about the school. Especially valued by parents are the good leadership and management of the school, the interesting range of activities outside lessons and the way in which the school helps children to become more mature and responsible. The inspection supports the positive views of parents. Some parents would like to be better informed about the progress their child is making. However the inspection found that the quality of information provided for parents is good, particularly that on pupils' progress.
41. The school has good and effective links with parents and these have been maintained since the last report. The school assigns a high priority to strengthening the links with parents. Information about the school is clear and helpful. The range and quality of information provided for parents are good. Parents receive regular newsletters, information about the work to be done in class and curriculum focused meetings. Sadly the recent curriculum related events, such as the numeracy meeting and the science day, have been poorly supported by parents. There are three opportunities for parents to meet staff each year, including a meeting at the end of the summer term for parents who wish to discuss their child's annual report. The annual report is clear, informative and identifies ways in which pupils can improve their standards. For Year 6 pupils transferring to secondary schools, arrangements are made for individual interviews for families.
42. The involvement of parents with the work of the school is satisfactory. Parents are warmly welcomed in school for social functions and school productions. The breakfast club is also open to parents and the school encourages a family atmosphere at this daily event. There is a well-organised Parent Teachers Association in the school that organises a good range of social events. Parents have also made a very significant contribution to improving the school with regular work parties to paint both classroom areas and also playground markings for games. Staff and parents are very supportive of social events and parents enjoy a range of productions and performances throughout the year. Parents of pre-school children have the opportunity to visit the school before their child starts school. The children also visit the school and begin to get to know their teacher. This contributes to the sense of security shown by the children in their first weeks in school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and involved in their child's education. Annual reviews for pupils who have a statement of special educational need are carried out appropriately and parents are involved. The school also carries out termly reviews of other pupils with special educational needs.
43. The impact of parents' involvement with the work of the school is satisfactory. There is a well-structured induction programme for new parents and pupils entering the reception class. Good guidance is also provided for parents in ways in which they can help their child to learn and

support their learning at home. Help with school work at home is variable but the school has identified this as an area to improve and has plans to provide parents with further guidance such as helping Year 6 parents to understand the mathematics that children are learning. A small number of parents provide regular help in school working in classes and carrying out a range of routine tasks. Their contribution to the school is greatly valued. The home school agreement is a clear and helpful summary of the partnership being developed between the school and home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher, supported by the deputy, senior management team and governors, provides very good leadership. He is energetic and provides a very good role model for the staff and pupils. He has a clear vision for the school's development and is raising standards through a range of positive strategies. For example, he identified where pupils were having problems answering questions in the national science tests and addressed those weaknesses. This has been a key factor in the significant improvements in science. His decisions to introduce the breakfast and Saturday clubs, as well as homework clubs and many other extra activities after lessons end, have had a remarkable effect on the attitudes of the pupils to school as well as their progress in lessons. This purposeful development of the school is clearly indicated by the good improvement that the school has made since it was last inspected in February 1998. The key issues for action have, overall, been addressed successfully and the aims of the school are fully reflected in its work. The team spirit and shared commitment evident in the school give it a good capacity to continue to improve. The good management ensures that pupils have equality of opportunity regardless of their gender, ability or ethnic origin, although it was noted that, on a very few occasions, pupils with special educational needs were withdrawn from the opening session of a lesson for specific support.
45. There is good management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and accurate records are maintained well. The funds allocated to the school for this area are used well and the governing body supports and monitors the school's provision. In their annual report, the governors explain the school's provision, including how resources have been allocated and used. However, they do not report on the success of the provision.
46. Governors involve themselves in aspects of school life and have very positive and supportive relationships with the staff and pupils. They visit the school to monitor specific classes or subjects and report back to the governing body. Appropriate sub-committees are in place. The governors fulfil their statutory requirements, including those for collective worship.
47. There is good monitoring of teaching and the curriculum by the headteacher and co-ordinators, which is an improvement from the last inspection. This is well documented and each teacher is given feedback. Each co-ordinator has the opportunity to visit classrooms during the year and also to scrutinise the pupils' exercise books. The school development plan focuses well on raising standards and improving other aspects of the school.
48. Careful financial planning, administration and monitoring of expenditure ensure that the school's resources are used well to promote the pupils' learning. The governors are involved with budget planning for the year and monitor the monthly budgeting plan. There are good procedures for checking what is spent and there is a helpful Finance Policy for the governors to refer to. The priority areas for spending are linked directly to the school development plan and then apportioned to subjects according to their specific need, which have been identified by the co-ordinators. Having been in deficit two years ago, the school is very rigorous about checking how the budget is looking each month, for example, there was a slight overspend on the Nurture Unit equipment which needed discussion. There is some evaluation of how the budget is spent on supporting curriculum subjects related to the raising of standards. The school applies the principles of best value well by asking for quotations from different firms and seeking advice from various professionals and using the governors' expertise.
49. The school uses the grants budgets very well indeed. The grants come from various sources such as Heritage Money, the Environmental Fund as well as opportunities to bid for funding from the education authority. However, the most important funding is from the Gillingham Partnership

that is managing the money from the Education Action Zone. The school bids for this giving an outline of what it intends to do and the funding is either granted or not. It is this funding that has given the school some freedom, within a structure, to put into place after school clubs for homework and to employ school counsellors. Many other initiatives have also been funded by this grant and will be in the future. The very good use of this funding has a very positive effect on the personal development of the pupils, on their attitudes and behaviour as well as having an impact on raising standards. The day-to-day running of the school is highly efficient due to the very good administrative officer. Daily routines operate smoothly and there are effective communication systems.

50. Some staff have only recently been allocated responsibility for the areas they manage and, as a result, are still developing their roles. There is an appropriate match of teaching staff to the demands of the curriculum, and the skills of the support staff are good and, sometimes, very good with some assistants studying higher level courses to further their knowledge. This is having a positive impact on the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Accommodation is good with designated rooms for the Nurture Unit, the special needs base, a classroom for teaching art and a library. The corridors have been substantially upgraded since the appointment of the headteacher and are wide and spacious enough to accommodate the ICT suite. As reported in the last report the hall is quite cluttered with dining tables and equipment. However, staff take great care to ensure safety for the pupils at all times. The quadrangle is an ideal environment for the young children to play, as it is attractive, large enough and very secure. Not all the resources are of such good quality, however, and need replacing or upgrading. For example, in mathematics, there are not enough resources for the teachers to use the strategies for teaching recommended for the numeracy hour. More resources are needed for design and technology and history.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. In order to continue to improve, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

(1) Improve standards in English by:

- raising the standards of teaching in Key Stage 2 in the opening sessions of the literacy hour, by improving questioning skills and the use of resources;
- ensuring that there are planned opportunities in the timetable for developing the pupils' expressive language, both spoken and written, for example, in drama and role-play;
- increasing the opportunities already available for pupils to develop higher order reading skills.

(Paragraphs 3, 5, 6, 20, 65, 66, 69, 71, 72)

(2) Improve standards in mathematics by:

- ensuring that the teaching of the mental and oral sessions in Key Stage 2 at the beginning of lessons is challenging and engages **all** the pupils;
- raising the level of teachers' skills and understanding of how to use the many resources and strategies available to teach the opening sessions of the numeracy hour.

(Paragraphs 3, 7, 20, 28, 75, 77, 79, 80)

(3) Improve the curriculum for the children under five in the foundation stage by:

- ensuring that it is planned with due regard to the areas of learning necessary for their development;
- providing more opportunities for planned independent play both inside and outside.

(Paragraphs 24, 56, 57, 62)

(4) Ensure that lesson planning is more sharply focused on the needs of different groups of pupils.

(Paragraphs 72, 80, 81, 115, 123)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	15	46	35	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	166
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	78

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	109

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	92.1
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.85
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	16	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	5	10
	Girls	10	9	10
	Total	17	14	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	55 (59)	45 (63)	65 (71)
	National	82 (80)	83 (89)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	10	6
	Girls	11	11	9
	Total	18	21	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	58 (59)	68 (63)	48 (70)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	21	11	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	5	11
	Girls	2	0	3
	Total	8	5	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	25 (44)	16 (40)	44 (32)
	National	70 (70)	69 (69)	78 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	5	11
	Girls	2	0	3
	Total	8	5	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	25 (44)	16 (40)	44 (32)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	143
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.75
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	261

Qualified teachers and support staff: unit

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9

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

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	16	0
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.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	473611
Total expenditure	453147
Expenditure per pupil	2410
Balance brought forward from previous year	20464
Balance carried forward to next year	20000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	166
Number of questionnaires returned	44

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	25	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	32	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	34	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	36	5	5	2
The teaching is good.	66	30	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	32	14	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	20	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	34	7	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	82	18	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	32	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	89	9	2	0	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

NURTURE UNIT

52. The provision provided by the unit for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, which was opened in September 1999, is very good. The teaching is consistently good. The staff has a wealth of knowledge, both of the needs of each of the pupils and of the National Curriculum. The lessons in the unit are carefully planned to match the needs of individual pupils. Pupils' behaviour is very good due to the very close and trusting relationships that teachers have with pupils. The questioning skills of the staff are very good. For example, they extend the vocabulary of the pupils with word games, linking the activities to the work on materials in science they are learning about in their class lessons.
53. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen well to the teacher and the assistant and to each other. They show enthusiasm for their learning and gain confidence. In one session observed, the pupils were having breakfast. The atmosphere was one of a family setting with pupils taking orders for breakfast from each other, taking responsibility for helping to cook, serve, eat and wash up. The very good modelling of the staff provided the pupils with the opportunity to display excellent co-operation, consideration and courteous behaviour as well as being able to develop their conversational skills in an informal setting. The pupils responded very well and made considerable progress in their speaking and listening skills and social and personal development. The staff are very patient with high expectations of what the pupils will do. This results in the pupils being inspired to talk openly of their experiences in a caring, trusting environment. Integration works well and pupils move between their own classrooms and the unit very smoothly.
54. The attainment of the pupils within the nurture unit is variable with most working towards the early levels in speaking. Pupils who are in the unit for part of the day have poor self-esteem, poor communication skills and difficult, sometimes anti-social behaviour. Nevertheless, they make good progress; they show they can concentrate, listen to others, participate and are able to indulge their curiosity. Pupils, who, in a class setting might not feel able to speak, answer the teacher confidently and communicate well with their peers in the unit. Other pupils who appear to be verbally confident but cause behaviour problems in the classroom, conform to the "rules" of the unit. Opportunities for speaking and listening are apparent in all sessions in the unit. The calm, fair and very good management of the pupils, as well as the pace of the lessons, allows the pupils to participate equally, enjoy their learning and know the boundaries of acceptable behaviours. The existence of the nurture unit is having a very good effect on the ethos of the school. The quality of this provision and the integration of the pupils into the school are a considerable strength of the school.

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

55. Children are admitted to the reception class on a part time basis in September or January according to their age. Older children become full time towards the middle of their first term and younger ones at the beginning of January. At the time of the inspection, the children were in their third week of schooling. They are accommodated in a large double classroom that also accommodates pupils in Year 1. Some children have experienced pre-school provision. Evidence from the baseline assessments of the present five-year-olds and inspection evidence shows that attainments on entry are well below average in all the areas of learning with the exception of physical development, where their attainment is below average. A significant number of children start school with particularly poorly developed language skills. Children receive a positive start to school and participate fully in all activities provided. They make sound progress and firmly develop and broadly consolidate their skills. However, evidence from the children who have just left the foundation stage at the end of Year R, shows that most children have not yet attained the early learning goals in any of the areas of learning. This is because so many children start school with such poorly developed skills and many have not yet developed

sufficient language skills to enable them to express themselves clearly. This is a similar picture to the findings of the previous inspection.

56. The quality of teaching is good overall and leads to sound learning. Strengths in the quality of teaching include a good understanding of the needs of young children, a gentle encouraging style which values the contributions of all and well managed children. The talented classroom assistant is very much part of the team and is used effectively to ensure that all children receive as much individual and small group support as possible. Where teaching is less successful, tasks offer little opportunity for children to develop their independence through planned play activities and there is insufficient difference in challenge between the tasks offered to pupils in Year 1 in the class and children in the reception year. The curriculum is planned mainly through National Curriculum subjects rather than the recently introduced early learning goals. This is unsatisfactory and leads to weaknesses in the provision for purposeful play and physical development. The previous inspection identified the same weaknesses in planning and recommended that the curriculum be planned in accordance with the desirable learning outcomes, which was the requirement until recently. This weakness has not been addressed sufficiently. The school has already recognised this and it is developing its curriculum for the early years as part of the initiatives Education Action Zone.

Personal, social and emotional development

57. Children have appropriate opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. They are eager to come to school because they know that their opinions are valued and that they will be offered interesting activities. They develop their skills through opportunities to work together in small groups and they make sound progress. The quality of teaching in personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory and the teacher and classroom assistant take every opportunity to develop these skills. However, because the children start school with such poorly developed skills, they are unlikely to meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Children are already secure in class routines and they begin to develop their independence by taking turns to take the register to the office. They are encouraged to reflect on their own work through displays which ask, 'What are you most pleased with?' Opportunities for children to develop their initiative and independence by deciding which activity they would like to experience and to take responsibility for recording their chosen activities are more limited.
58. Children begin to take responsibility for their own belongings. For example, they are expected to put their clothes tidily when changing for physical education and to put their sweatshirt neatly in the box provided when they remove it during the day. Adults take every opportunity to develop personal and social skills through class discussions, where children are encouraged to tell the class their news. Good relationships ensure that they are secure and confident with adults whom they know, although many are shy with visitors. Children are well behaved because they know what is expected of them. For example, during the inspection, they sensibly walked the length of the corridor to the hall without being distracted by the activities they passed on the way. The well-established routines, the consistent expectations of behaviour and the caring attitudes of all adults make a significant contribution to the sense of security felt by the children.

Communication, language and literacy

59. Few children are on course to attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. Attainment is well below the expected standard. A significant number of children have poor skills when they start school and the teacher and classroom assistant take every opportunity to develop these skills in discussion. As a result, children make good progress. Appropriate opportunities are provided for children to develop their speaking and listening skills through role-play in the home corner. However, there is sometimes insufficient focus to these tasks to include other aspects of literacy and this impedes progress. For example, during the inspection, the home corner did not include opportunities for writing. Samples of writing from the present five-year-olds show that by the time they are five, most children can trace their name and higher attaining children make a good attempt to write it. Children have appropriate

opportunities to practise their writing skills. For example, during the inspection, they practised writing patterns using paint and learned to begin at the left and move to the right. Opportunities to develop writing skills through play are underdeveloped. Good emphasis is placed on developing reading skills. Children enjoy stories and rhymes and try to join in with their teacher. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed the actions to a range of well-known rhymes and tried to repeat the words. The teacher questioned the children sensitively to ensure that they understood the meaning of the words. Most children enjoy books and higher attaining children tell a story using pictures to help them. The quality of teaching is good and as a result children make good gains in their learning from a very low starting point on entry to school. All adults take every opportunity to extend and enrich language and this has a positive impact on the progress made. The previous inspection identified a similar picture, with speaking and writing skills being particularly poorly developed.

Mathematical development

60. Attainment in mathematical development is well below that expected to meet the early learning goals at the end of the foundation stage. Evidence from the current five-year-olds shows that they can match a bear to a bed and trace numerals to five. Higher attaining children show an understanding of numbers to nine. They develop their mathematical skills through a variety of practical activities. For example, they learn to identify a circle and a rectangle and to name primary colours through their play with bricks. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good and leads to good achievement. During the inspection, children developed their mathematical understanding well because the teacher noticed opportunities in their play. For example, children learned 'taller' and 'shorter' because a child built a tower that was taller than his friend, and the teacher used this opportunity to teach children that towers of the same height can include a different number of bricks if the bricks are of different thicknesses. Children learned the need for flat faces when building towers of bricks through their own experiments. They develop their counting skills through singing number rhymes such as 'Three blind mice', regularly and learn to count using a range of objects.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well below that expected in order to meet the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. They learn the terms 'hard' and 'soft' through touching a variety of objects on display. They learn the difference between plastic, metal and wood when they sort items from their classroom. They learn the best methods of joining boxes together through experimenting with tape and a range of glues. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. During the inspection, children made sound gains in their understanding of 'old' and 'new', during a lesson about baptism, when the children examined an old Christening shawl. Attractive resources, such as a baptismal candle, a clerical robe and Christening certificates, fascinated the children and extended their understanding of Christian practices. Children develop an understanding of the world around them through discussion and some children know where they live. They use the computers with developing confidence to support literacy and numeracy skills.

Physical development

62. The children's physical development is below the standards expected at five years old and they make sound progress. They gain confidence in using space through weekly opportunities for physical education in the hall. They walk in and out of spaces and respond to their teacher's instruction to stop. Most can jog and find a space to sit in. Some children can catch a ball, but sending and receiving skills are underdeveloped for many children. Although there is an enclosed play area equipped with wheeled toys and climbing apparatus, the use of this is not planned as part of the curriculum and, consequently, there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their skills. In the lesson seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good. This was the second lesson for the children and it was characterised by clear

expectations, good demonstrations, brisk pace and the opportunity for children to evaluate the movements of others. Children handle small toys and scissors regularly to develop their manipulative skills. For example, they cut out objects that they have drawn and build towers with bricks.

Creative development

63. The children's creative development is well below what is expected for children at the end of the reception year. They learn to use paint and pastels appropriately to paint pictures based on famous portraits. They learn how to use different materials to make collages of houses and develop their hand control. Some children know simple songs by heart. It was not possible to see any teaching in this area of learning during the inspection.

ENGLISH

64. The results of the end of key stage tests in English in 1999 were very low in both key stages in comparison with the national average and in the lowest five per cent compared to all schools. When compared to similar schools, results are very low except for reading in Key Stage 1, which is well below average. In Key Stage 1, in reading and writing, results dropped from the previous two years. The test results in 2000 show a moderate improvement with more pupils achieving the expected levels. However, very few pupils achieved the higher levels and the results of all pupils are likely to be below average when compared to other schools. Inspection findings are that attainment in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 is below average. However, the pupils' achievement is good from a very low starting point on entry to school.
65. In Key Stage 2, in English, attainment declined in 1999 changing the upward trend, which was disappointing. However, the school had predicted this drop as 70 per cent of the particular group of pupils had been identified as having special educational needs. The test results in 2000 show an improvement with a higher percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment although results, overall, are still below average. Inspection findings confirm these results but the school has set challenging targets and has organised homework clubs and a Saturday club in order to achieve them. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Overall, standards are similar to those found in the last inspection and pupils are achieving appropriately.
66. By the age of seven, most pupils listen attentively and their skills are broadly in line with national expectations. They enjoy responding to questions but find it difficult to express themselves and struggle to name specific objects and to include detail in their answers. During the inspection week, the pupils presented an assembly on their work in science and, with the sensitive encouragement of their teacher, showed that they are making good progress in their speaking skills. In Year 2, pupils are keen to read and enjoy sharing their books but standards are below expectations. A very few are fluent readers in terms of word recognition but they read with little expression. Some pupils can recognise capital letters and full stops as markers for the end of a sentence, they can say what the title of a book is and they know how to identify the author. However, pupils tend to disregard their mistakes and read on without realising that they do not understand the storyline. The pupils find it difficult to discuss the story and often ignore the pictures that would help them to gain clues and to read words they find difficult. Higher attaining pupils can explain the difference between fact and fiction and know where to find specific books in the library.
67. In Year 2, standards in writing are below expectations. The pupils' handwriting skills vary with a few pupils beginning to join the letters correctly and presenting their work neatly. Some pupils are still mixing upper and lower case letters in their words and some do not attempt to join their letters. Most pupils are concentrating on learning how to spell words in families and make sound progress learning how to spell words that occur often. A limited number of pupils write using more interesting words and their work is usually neatly presented and well organised. They are becoming more independent. Some pupils are beginning to use descriptive words and

phrases effectively, such as 'finally' and 'in the beginning', and the few pupils who are confident in their writing are eager to produce their stories.

68. In Year 4, a few pupils can read fluently and are able to predict events using inference and deduction as well as being able to offer their opinions about specific books. The higher attaining pupils read expressively with few errors, pay attention to punctuation and express their likes or dislikes. However, handwriting skills are still inconsistent and, in Year 5, some pupils still have poor letter formation and do not join letters.
69. In Year 6, the pupils' listening skills are in line with expectations. They listen attentively and are more confident than the younger pupils when answering questions and expressing themselves although their oral language skills are below expectations. In their reading, higher attaining pupils can express an obvious enjoyment of books, talk about the story and identify characters but they are only just beginning to think about the plot and how it develops. They are generally accurate readers but lack expression. Average attaining pupils in Year 6 read slowly, hesitating over some words and unable to recall the story. Their handwriting skills improve as they move through the school, but not all pupils consistently join their letters. Pupils usually take care presenting their work. Higher attaining pupils use more complex sentence structures and include a sound range of vocabulary in their writing. Basic punctuation is usually accurate and includes full stops, use of commas and paragraphs. There is evidence of the higher attaining pupils using speech marks confidently and writing stories with effective endings. More pupils are becoming adventurous in their use of vocabulary by using words, such as 'barbaric', 'cantankerous' and phrases such as, 'redder than a pomegranate'. Inspection findings are that attainment in reading and writing is below expectation.
70. The quality of teaching is consistently good in Key Stage 1. The implementation of the literacy hour is effective and during the opening sessions, teachers in this key stage use good questioning techniques, which encourage pupils to move forward in their expressive oral language. The methods that teachers use engage the pupils and they try very hard to answer questions and use descriptive words. They clearly enjoy their lessons and are motivated to persevere in their thinking to predict the story line. Teachers have high expectations and challenge the pupils, which results in new learning about vocabulary and how to write a story. Effective teaching of basic skills in this key stage results in good achievement being made by the pupils. Well planned methods for teaching pupils of different abilities is evident, such as in Year 1, where the teacher organised the lower attaining pupils to work on letter shapes with playdough. Other pupils write with thick crayon or on an easel. Good management and control ensures the pupils behave well which, in turn, has a positive impact on good concentration and learning. Ongoing good assessment in lessons is evident in Key Stage 1 during the group reading session in the literacy hour and helps the teachers to plan exactly what the pupils needs to learn next.
71. The quality of teaching overall in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory and there are examples of good and very good lessons. Where teaching is good and very good for the middle years of this key stage, good use of questioning ensures a fast pace of learning where pupils are expected to answer with higher level descriptive words, encouraged to use a thesaurus quickly and to use more interesting vocabulary. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding of both fiction and poetry in the good and very good lessons ensures that pupils are challenged by the vocabulary and technical writing of the authors and poet. They are fascinated by some of the words, such as 'churl' and 'damsel' in the Lady of Shalott poem and learn about pattern and metre. High expectations ensure that the pupils know that the teacher will not accept ordinary words as a description and they know they must find exciting words in the dictionaries and other resource books. Their achievement is good in these lessons. In the lessons deemed to be satisfactory, teachers talk too much at the beginning of the lesson and do not aim questions at groups of pupils, or individuals, and ask those few pupils who have their hands up all the time. As a result, pupils are not encouraged to express their ideas and extend their oral language and their achievement is satisfactory. Knowledge and understanding of how to teach the literacy hour is not totally secure in these lessons and, as a result, some pupils appear listless and make little progress. Occasionally, pupils become noisy and more difficult to manage.

72. The quality of marking throughout the school is inconsistent in English. Sometimes work is just ticked or general comments made. Where the comments are related to their targets, the pupils know what they must do next to achieve the next level. This is good practice. The use of individual targets for the pupils to aim at is useful, but does not extend to how to improve the content of their creative writing. There is little evidence of teachers modelling good writing for the pupils across the school but, where it is in evidence in Key Stage 1, pupils are challenged and their written and spoken vocabulary improves. There is good teaching of literacy in history where pupils write descriptive accounts and in science where pupils write letters to the local council complaining about pollution in the area, as well as writing up their experience of fair testing. Teachers plan adequately using the national literacy formats but matching of tasks to different abilities in Key Stage 2 is not always appropriate and, as a result, pupils do not always make sufficient progress in lessons. Assessment is satisfactory with teachers using their short-term planning sheets to evaluate the pupils' work. The school's resources are appropriate and support materials are good for the pupils with special educational needs.
73. The co-ordinator for English has a good understanding of her role and has begun to identify areas for development. Monitoring of teaching is in place and samples of the pupils' work are scrutinised regularly. The school has made a good start in moderating pupils' writing and keeping portfolios of levelled work, which is beginning to make an impact on raising standards. All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum although there are occasions when pupils are withdrawn during the first input session of the lessons to have support from assistants. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

74. The results of the end of key stage tests in mathematics in 1999 were very low in comparison with the national average and in the lowest five per cent compared to all schools. When compared to similar schools, the picture is almost the same. In Key Stage 1, the results are very similar to the previous year. The test results in 2000 show a moderate improvement with more pupils achieving the expected levels. However, few pupils achieved the higher levels and the results are likely to be below average when compared to other schools. The inspection findings confirm these results and show a decline in standards since the last inspection.
75. In Key Stage 2, the results dropped sharply from the previous year changing the upward trend, which was moving slowly towards the national average. The school had predicted this, as in this particular year group 70 per cent of pupils had special educational needs. The test results in 2000 show an improvement with a higher percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment although results are still below average. Inspection findings reflect these results. However, the school has set challenging targets and is working hard to achieve them. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys or girls. Overall, standards are not significantly different from the findings of the last inspection. Achievement is sound overall by the age of eleven with pupils making appropriate gains in their learning.
76. By the age of seven, pupils can count forwards and backwards in tens but have more difficulty adding twenty to ten. The pupils need help to spot the missing numbers in a pattern. They really enjoy playing a bingo game when a child or the teacher calls out "Ten more than forty", or "Twenty less than sixty". However, most of the pupils struggle with understanding the mathematical vocabulary. A very few pupils can explain how they worked out these problems. One pupil said he held the number in his head and counted on. In another lesson, the pupils were very motivated to work out the answers to calculations such as twenty-four add ten but found it difficult. They were highly successful at telling the teacher she had made mistakes with her sums on the flipchart, for example ten plus ten is thirty, and quickly tried to work them out! The lower attaining pupils are only able to find the missing numbers in a hundred square with support and are still struggling to write their numbers neatly.
77. By the age of eleven, most pupils are familiar with the easier multiplication tables such as the four times, five times and ten times tables. They are also quick at finding the answers to the nine times because they have learned that there is a pattern to the answers and why! A very few know their twelve times tables but average attaining pupils do not know their six, seven and

eight times tables. The very few higher attaining pupils are able to work out the lowest common denominator of simple fractions but the average and lower attaining pupils struggle with this activity. Some pupils can understand the place value of numbers to 1000 and can explain the value of each digit. Their understanding of decimals is poor but they know what is half of a litre and a kilogram. The estimation skills of most pupils using metres and centimetres is sound. Pupils explain how they have solved simple problems and use mathematical symbols and diagrams correctly. They can name three-dimensional shapes and some pupils can name their properties using the terms, 'vertices', 'edges' and 'faces'.

78. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is good and sometimes very good. This is an improvement from the last inspection. The implementation of the numeracy hour in this key stage is effective. There is evidence of very good use of resources in the direct teaching sessions, which has a positive impact on the pupils' interest and motivation which is good. For example, in the Year 1 class the teacher uses a large sponge dice to teach the pupils how to predict which number will be on top. She has high expectations and this impacts on the good concentration of pupils. Some pupils predict eight or nine and the teacher perseveres with her questioning of these very young pupils to further their understanding that these numbers will never appear. Pupils consolidate their knowledge of number in Year 2 with the help of a three-dimensional "Ten more monster" stuck on the board. This excellent resource has an immediate effect on the pupils who are fascinated watching their teacher put the card (24 + 10) in the monster's mouth and seeing another card emerge with 34 on it. Well-planned activities for all abilities in both classes ensure that all pupils make good progress within the lessons and no pupil feels that they have failed. Very good support in both classes from teachers and assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 1 is good.
79. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is more variable and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory but, overall, is satisfactory which is in line with the findings of the last inspection. The implementation of the numeracy hour is satisfactory but a narrow range of teaching strategies is used to teach the oldest and youngest pupils in this key stage and the use of a commercial scheme sometimes limits the progress of pupils, particularly the average and lower attainers. In a good lesson on measurement the use of the same worksheet containing a sketch of a robot was very appropriate. The teacher made it clear during a good opening session that the average and higher attaining pupils should be far more precise with their measurements and give their answers in decimals.
80. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or weaker, the mental and oral session at the beginning of the lesson is slow and not all of the pupils are involved in giving oral answers during the introduction to the main part of the lesson. In contrast, in a very good lesson, the fast and challenging questioning inspires the pupils to work hard. The very good questioning allows the teacher to gauge the pupils' progress so that she extends them constantly, expecting the average and higher attaining pupils to explain what the inverse operation of subtraction is and involving the lower attainers at the same time. This inspires the pupils to concentrate and, as a result, they gain a better understanding of number in this lesson. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the middle years of this key stage, due to the better teaching in Years 4 and 5, and satisfactory progress in the other year groups. Planning does not always identify the key objective from the numeracy strategy or how the mental and oral session at the beginning of the lesson will be organised. The excellent resources available for teaching the opening sessions of the numeracy hour are rarely used, except for digit cards in one lesson. Management and control of the pupils in both key stages are good which results in pupils settling down quickly and concentrating on their work.
81. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and the use of targets for individual pupils gives a good indication of progress. There is good evidence of the use of mathematics in ICT across the school and in geography, where pupils draw line graphs to show specific information they have gathered, and in science where pupils measure the distance vehicles travel and use thermometers to measure temperature. Planning in the school is inconsistent and a good model for planning is in Key Stage 1 where the Numeracy Strategy suggested plan is used. This shows clearly how pupils of different ability will be taught during the main activity session and identifies the key objectives of learning. Very clear evaluation is also shown on these

sheets. Through analysis of test results and termly assessments, the co-ordinators have identified where pupils have problems with specific areas of mathematics and take appropriate action to address the latter. They have supported the staff by providing appropriate training and have had opportunities for observing lessons. All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum throughout the school although, on one or two occasions, pupils were withdrawn during the first session of mathematics to have some support from assistants. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

SCIENCE

82. Inspection evidence shows that standards in science are in line with the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards are below expectations by the end of Key Stage 1. This represents significant improvement since 1999 and pupils are achieving well. In 1999, results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, and results of statutory tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards were very low and very few pupils exceeded the expected level at either key stage. The most recent statutory tests and teacher assessments for 2000, for which comparative figures are not yet available, show considerable improvement. By the end of Key Stage 1, almost 25 per cent more pupils reached the expected level and three times as many exceeded the expected level than in 1999. By the end of Key Stage 2, almost twice as many pupils reached the expected level and half of them exceeded this level. This is very good improvement from the last inspection findings.
83. The main reason for the improvement in standards, particularly at Key Stage 2, is that the school has closely analysed assessment data to identify areas of weakness. When pupils start school, many have limited language skills and so the school places great emphasis on teaching correct scientific vocabulary from an early age. Consequently, by the time pupils reach Year 6 they are familiar with many scientific terms and this helps them to do well in the statutory tests. Pupils in Year 6 are taught science by the headteacher who provides a very good role model and enthusiastically shares his considerable scientific knowledge with the pupils. Other factors that contribute to improvement are the emphasis on reinforcing study skills for homework and the Saturday booster club for older pupils in Key Stage 2, where pupils are taught to approach their tasks scientifically and revise statutory test papers. Concepts are regularly discussed and revised at the beginning of lessons to reinforce what pupils know.
84. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good and pupils make good gains in their learning. This is a considerable improvement from the previous inspection, where there were weaknesses in the quality of teaching and pupils made unsatisfactory progress. Pupils enjoy science and show enthusiasm for their work because tasks are interesting. For example, pupils in Year 2 were fascinated by the changes that took place when conducting an investigation to predict what happens to an egg when it is cooked in different ways. Supported by the able classroom assistant, they developed their vocabulary and learned that an egg yolk has a membrane that holds it together. In another lesson in Year 2, for pupils with special educational needs, the teacher's good use of humour motivated the pupils to learn scientific vocabulary related to materials. Particular strengths in the quality of teaching include very good use of classroom assistants and resources, and well managed pupils.
85. Pupils in Year 1 develop their understanding of their senses through the use of a 'feely' box and develop their vocabulary by describing what they can feel. By Year 2, pupils know that tomatoes have seeds, and describe tissue paper as smooth and a spoon as cold and made from metal. They know how to make a simple electrical circuit. They conduct experiments to predict what happens to ice as it melts and to find out if a lorry will travel as fast as a car down a slope. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 demonstrated their understanding of materials and their properties in an assembly for the whole school. This was good and effective use of their language skills and contributed positively to their spiritual development as they reflected on the many different materials. The previous inspection suggested that pupils in Key Stage 1 had limited knowledge in many aspects of the curriculum. This is no longer the case.
86. During the inspection, the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 ranged from satisfactory to very good. It is very good overall. Two examples of very good teaching were seen in Year 6, where

the class was taught by the headteacher. Here, very high expectations and a brisk pace enable pupils to complete a good amount of work in lessons and contributes positively to the high standards attained. Pupils were challenged to conduct an investigation to establish which object would fall to the ground first. The teacher provided an interesting choice and encouraged pupils to select other objects to supplement the objects offered. The pupils were encouraged to behave like scientists, establishing a hypothesis and ensuring that the tests were fair. Good opportunities to work independently in small groups motivated the pupils who showed interest and perseverance in their tasks. In the second very good lesson, pupils devised their own methods for recording the results of their investigation, working systematically to ensure that each step of their investigation was clearly recorded. The teacher continually encouraged pupils to think by posing challenging questions such as 'If I weigh ten stone on earth, how much will I weigh on the moon?' As a result, pupils made good gains in their understanding of gravity because of the teacher's clear explanation.

87. In the satisfactory lesson, for pupils in Year 3, pupils learned about the diet of a range of animals through their own research. Pupils in Year 3 understand how to look after their teeth and know how a rocket moves. They understand the basic conditions for growth. By Year 4, they are confident with terms such as 'friction', 'resistance' and 'drag' when recording their investigations. They conduct tests to establish thermal insulators and conductors. By Year 5 pupils know how sounds are made and that the more energy in the vibration, the louder the sound. They conduct investigations to test evaporation. Since the previous inspection, where investigative activities were underdeveloped, the school has worked hard to ensure that this aspect of the curriculum is covered well. This is another factor that contributes to improvement in standards.
88. Pupils of all ages use their developing literacy and numeracy skills to support their work in science. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 label their diagrams and write accounts about materials. In Key Stage 2, pupils write letters to complain about pollution and use their numeracy skills to measure distances travelled in their investigations and to record the measurements of bones graphically.
89. The co-ordinator has a very clear view for developing the subject further and she provides good leadership. She has monitored teaching and standards effectively. A recent initiative to monitor teachers' questioning skills and provide feedback has contributed to the improvement in the pupils' scientific knowledge and the consequent rise in standards. The curriculum is well planned using national guidance, which the school is tailoring to its own requirements, particularly for investigative work. A useful collection of samples of work, which have been matched to National Curriculum levels and agreed by teachers, has been started to aid assessment.

ART AND DESIGN

90. By the end of both key stages, standards meet those expected for pupils of their age and pupils are achieving well which is good progress from a low starting point on entry. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, where standards were judged to be below expectations and progress was unsatisfactory. The school has successfully addressed other shortcomings pointed out then, broadening the range of materials available, introducing three-dimensional work and improving teachers' understanding of the subject.
91. Pupils in Key Stage 1 experience an appropriate range of art activities. They experiment with crayon and paint to produce attractive pictures of sunflowers based on the work of Van Gogh. They explore textures in a range of fabrics before using them to create a large collage of sunflowers. From their early experiments with colour mixing, for example painting a vase of violets, they progress to using colour effectively when they produce patterns showing changes in tone. Observational drawing skills are developed through careful observation of their faces, resulting in attractive drawings, which show good attention to shape and tone. Three-dimensional skills are developed through the use of clay to make pots and plaques.
92. The works of well-known artists are used effectively in Key Stage 2 as a stimulus. For example, pupils learn to use watercolour effectively through their study of the works of Monet and Lowry

and develop their skills in colour mixing when they produce attractive paintings based on Picasso's 'Woman in a hat'. Pictures based on the work of David Hockney by pupils in Year 6 are of good quality, showing attention to detail. Older pupils show good attention to shade when they make observational drawings of parts of the school grounds. Pupils in Year 6 use their three dimensional skills effectively when they produce attractive masks, built up in paper mache on a clay base. Art is well used to support other subjects. For example, after a visit to the Eiffel Tower, pupils in Key Stage 2 created delightful paintings depicting the view from the top, showing an understanding of perspective, and also of the tower itself. The art work produced after this visit makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

93. A strong feature, which contributes to the improvement since the previous inspection, is the provision of several clubs where pupils can develop their skills. Examples of work from the nightly homework club show that pupils develop their skills in using materials to make collage faces. Members of the Art club learn to use a wide range of media such as inks, water colours and clay. Older pupils who attend the Saturday club develop their skills in techniques such as scraffito. All these opportunities contribute positively to the improvements seen during the inspection.
94. There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching at either key stage as only two lessons were seen during the inspection, one in each key stage. However, the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection, where it was judged to be unsatisfactory. In the lesson seen for pupils in Year 2, the quality of teaching was very good and led to very good learning. Here, the teacher shared her very good knowledge of the subject to enable pupils to produce self-portraits of good quality. Stimulating resources, such as portraits and photographs of people taken from different angles challenged pupils to think and encouraged close observation, resulting in effective use of shading and texture. Pupils showed positive attitudes to their work because it was interesting and they knew that it was acceptable to make a mistake. In the lesson seen for pupils in Year 5, the quality of teaching was good. The teacher set a good example in modelling the use of gradation of shade in still life stories and continually encouraged pupils to improve their sketches. Good work habits are well established and pupils are encouraged to behave like artists, adjusting their still life arrangement to give the best lighting. Pupils show pride in their achievements because they know their efforts are valued.
95. The standard of display is high and is used well to celebrate pupils' achievements across all areas of the curriculum. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and has contributed positively to the improvement in provision and standards. The curriculum is currently under review as part of the Education Action Zone initiative and exciting developments are planned to share expertise and resources.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. Only two lessons in design and technology were observed during the inspection week due to the organisation of the subject throughout the term. Although a few photographs were available showing pupils in Key Stage 2 making houses from a variety of materials during the last school year, it is not possible to make a judgement on standards from what is a small evidence base. Both lessons in Key Stage 1 were planned to teach the pupils to make choices and find out the best way of joining two-dimensional and three-dimensional boxes and other containers using only glue or masking tape. Pupils in Year 2 responded to this challenge with great enjoyment, trying to follow the teacher's instructions to work and make decisions together. Most of the pupils were able to join the surfaces and were able to explain whether glue or masking tape was the best method of joining. In this element of working with materials and components, standards are similar to those found in most schools and achievement is good. The products produced by the pupils makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social development as well as having an impact on their learning in mathematics.
97. The evidence shows that the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is good and that most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This finding

represents an improvement from the previous inspection. The planning for the Year 2 lesson includes an emphasis on improving the pupils' social and communication skills by encouraging them to discuss their choices in groups of three. This has a positive impact on the development of the pupils' expressive language. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the teacher persists with her questioning of groups and individual pupils and ensures that each pupil tries to answer questions, such as "What did you find difficult? Why wouldn't that eggbox join easily to the cornflakes box?" These good questioning skills contribute positively to pupils beginning to think about how they might improve their own performance in the next lesson of this unit of work. The subject makes a good contribution to the teaching of mathematics. In the opening session, the teacher asked questions about the names of the boxes and a few pupils named the cube. When a pupil called the cuboid a rectangle, the teacher's good knowledge and understanding enabled the pupils' learning in mathematics to improve by pointing to one of the faces of the cuboid and explaining, very clearly, that the face is a rectangle but the whole box is called a cuboid.

98. Although the school is making use of national guidance, units of work have yet to be developed as planning guidance. The curriculum is currently under review as part of the Education Action Zone initiative. Assessment of pupils' skills is satisfactory and the co-ordinator monitors the teaching of the subject satisfactorily. The co-ordinator is aware that the subject needs more focus and that further resources need to be purchased, particularly for Key Stage 2.

GEOGRAPHY

99. At the end of both key stages, standards in geography are below those expected for pupils of this age. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory which is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. Judgements are made on one lesson in Year 6, records of past work, photographs, discussions with the pupils and an analysis of planning for the subject. The display of the recent visits to Paris on Eurostar by the whole of Key Stage 2 shows how pupils are beginning to learn the location of places and to describe where they are. Maps and plans around the school stress the importance of the geographical features of the local area, which is helping all pupils to be more aware of the specific geographical features of the locality of Gillingham.
100. From the work in their books, it is clear that pupils in Year 2 are beginning to develop an awareness of how rivers are formed, they have studied maps of England and Wales and how the use of a key helps to understand maps. They have had experience of designing a travel brochure thinking of the best language to attract prospective visitors. The youngest pupils are developing their mapping skills by learning about their specific area, marking on maps where the shops and familiar places are situated.
101. By Year 6, pupils develop an understanding of how a river affects the landscape. Most pupils can talk about the physical features of the country park, such as the mudflats and marshes. The very few higher attaining pupils write about how the river affects the landscape and express their feelings about pollution. Most pupils' learning in this lesson is mainly related to consolidating their drawing and language skills rather than geography, as a result of the short time planned for the lesson. The teacher's good use of the support assistant ensures that the pupils with special educational needs are making sound progress.
102. There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching at either key stage as only one lesson was seen during the inspection, which was in Key Stage 2. However, the quality of the teaching in the lesson observed was judged to be satisfactory. Open questioning enabled pupils to explain how they feel about pollution but, in such a short lesson, pupils were unable to complete the writing task, which limited their learning.
103. The co-ordinator for geography has only recently taken responsibility for the subject. There is an up-to-date policy and the curriculum is planned using national schemes of work. The curriculum is under review as part of the Education Action Zone initiative. Pupils enjoy geography especially their many visits, which make a significant contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural development. Visits include Paris by train, Rochester Guildhall Museum, the Castle grounds and esplanade. There are good links with other subjects, such as English and

ICT, which were used to generate descriptive reports about the visit to Paris. Geography is given emphasis in the school and displays in the library are of a high quality showing different people, cultures and languages around the world, together with a display of Gillingham highlighting the school. Old picture cards and photographs related to areas on the map add further interest. This emphasis contributes to the pupils' understanding of the importance of geography in the curriculum. Resources are adequate but new atlases are needed. The co-ordinator monitors the teaching of the subject and also analyses the pupils' exercise books to check the development of their learning, which has a positive impact on raising standards.

HISTORY

104. In both key stages the standards pupils attain are below those expected for their age and their achievement is satisfactory. This finding is in line with that of the previous inspection for Key Stage 1 but represents a decline in standards for Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards for their capabilities due to the good support they receive. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn about the differences between the way people lived long ago and today, such as how few toys children had in Victorian times as well as the changes in house design and the different materials used a hundred years ago. The pupils in Key Stage 2 are given a much wider curriculum. There is evidence in the work scrutiny of a study of the Tudor period by Year 6 pupils in the last school year. A wide range of work was covered and it is clear that higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand what it was like to live in those times. Their descriptive writing included pleading letters explaining why they should not be chosen to go away to sea because their skills, for example of a carpenter, were needed where they lived. The average and lower attaining pupils struggle to cope with such work because they find it difficult to express themselves both orally and in their writing.
105. The pupils in Year 6 have just begun a study of the Victorians and, in the short lesson observed, used information and communication technology to find out very specific information about the lives of children during that period. In Year 4, the pupils attempt a piece of writing pretending to be Celts and how it feels to be raided by their enemy invaders. Their factual knowledge of the Celts is fairly limited after only three weeks in school and only a very few pupils manage to convey how terrifying it would be to be a child or a grown woman or man in those circumstances. For example, three pupils wrote, "I feel cold and miserable inside", "My troops were killed" and "I felt anxious." The pupils in Year 2 are just beginning to be able to notice the differences in photographs of houses a hundred years ago and today. They notice, when questioned and with prompting, that the windows open a different way.
106. The teaching of history is good overall throughout the school, which is an improvement from the last inspection. Pupils' work shows that teachers have a secure understanding of what is appropriate for pupils to know, thus the pupils' knowledge is growing. The teaching of literacy and ICT within history is a strength and furthers the pupils' skills in these areas. Teachers' expectations are high, which has an effect on the intellectual and physical effort the pupils' put into their responses. For example, in Year 6, having been given their instructions, the pupils immediately walked to the IT suite with enthusiasm and purpose, quickly logging on and accessing the Internet or Encarta, the encyclopaedia program. The methods teachers use, for example, first hand resources such as photographs, interest the pupils, which results in their attentive listening and concentration. Management and control are good, which means that no time is wasted.
107. The co-ordinator is newly appointed and enthusiastic and uses national materials to ensure coverage of the subject. The curriculum is currently under review as part of the Education Action Zone initiative. The co-ordinator has enjoyed having release from teaching to join other history co-ordinators to discuss their mutual problems and, as a result, she is beginning to identify the strengths and areas of development needed in the teaching of history. Resources have been requested by the teachers and will be purchased during this year to match the units of work. The pupils are taken to a variety of places to enrich the history curriculum, for example, the Bethnal Green Toy Museum. The research the pupils are expected to do as part of their history curriculum contributes positively to raising standards in English and ICT. The assessment of

the subject is satisfactory and time has already been allocated to the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching of the subject but, as yet, is only in the early stage of development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with the national expectation by the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievement is good and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The previous inspection found that standards were below expectations, pupils had insufficient opportunities to use computers and there was no direct teaching of skills. The school has very successfully addressed these weaknesses.
109. There are several reasons why standards and provision have improved so significantly. An important factor is the provision of an information and communication technology suite, which is well equipped with sufficient computers of good quality to allow a whole class to be taught at the same time. Pupils now develop their skills steadily and systematically as they move through the school. Another reason for improvement is the use pupils make of computers outside lessons. For example, there is a computer club every night, pupils use the computers each lunchtime and the Saturday club also gives opportunities for the development of skills. These opportunities have a positive impact on the standards attained.
110. Pupils show positive attitudes to the subject and are keen to demonstrate their skills. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 2 confidently 'logged on' and demonstrated their skills with a wide range of programs including word processing, art packages, simulations and the Internet. They retrieved information that they had previously saved. Pupils in Year 2 show a good understanding of how to send a programmable toy along a route, both forwards and backwards. During the inspection, the computer club gave good opportunities for pupils to develop these skills.
111. By Year 6, pupils are competent in all strands of the curriculum and are enthusiastic to use computers to help them in many areas of the curriculum. Good emphasis is placed on teaching typing skills and safe practice. For example, pupils know that it is important to sit at the correct height. As a result of direct teaching of typing skills, many pupils are beginning to type accurately at a reasonable speed. Pupils use their skills effectively across the curriculum. They use word processing skills effectively in literacy to write poems and accounts about autumn, using a range of fonts and format functions. They write letters about a music workshop and detailed accounts of their visit to the Eiffel Tower. They use databases and spreadsheets in science to compile graphs showing the distance of planets from earth, comparisons between plastic and metal and different types of rocks. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 use paint programs to produce a range of patterns, some based on the work of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 4 use their word processing skills to produce poems about science, changing the font and size and pupils in Year 5 use their research skills effectively to search the Internet for information about the Tudors.
112. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching at either key stage because few lessons were observed during the inspection. However in the two lessons seen, both at Key Stage 2, pupils used the computers independently and with enjoyment. For example, pupils in Year 5 worked sensibly in pairs practising their typing skills. They made sound gains in their learning because they were well supported by the teacher and classroom assistant, who encouraged safe practices and taught them to type rhythmically with relaxed hands. In the lesson for pupils in Year 6, pupils confidently used a CD Rom and the Internet to research information about Victorian times. They were highly motivated because the task was interesting and were willing to persevere when encountering difficulties.
113. The co-ordinator has worked hard to successfully address the weaknesses pointed out in the previous inspection. He has raised staff awareness in the use of the subject and implemented the use of the computer suite. The curriculum has been improved to ensure that all pupils have timetabled use of the suite as well as using the computers in the classrooms. A new scheme of work has been introduced recently to ensure that pupils develop their skills steadily and systematically and this has a positive impact on standards. Formal opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor standards and teaching have been introduced recently but the co-ordinator

monitors informally by examining saved work and by observation of pupils using the suite, which is located in a large corridor. The co-ordinator has suitably identified assessment as an area for development.

MUSIC

114. Throughout the school, pupils' standards in music are below those expected for their ages. There has been a decline in standards compared with the findings of the previous inspection. In Year 2, pupils can create sounds with voice and body, performing simple patterns and maintaining a simple beat. They enjoy musical games and keep their concentration, listening to the teacher's instructions, which has an impact on their learning about pattern. In Year 4, they listen well to the Carnival of the Animals and can describe music as fast like mice running, but there are missed opportunities to teach musical terms such as pitch, timbre and shape. In Year 6, pupils are not given appropriate work and are performing at a low level. They are not introduced to the vocabulary of the unit of work being used, such as rhythm, steady, ostinato and pattern. Standards of singing in the school are good with pupils being taught how to enunciate their words and make effective musical sounds. They are also taught to sing some songs as rounds. In assemblies, pupils sing modern and old songs with good diction. Their achievement is satisfactory.
115. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Key Stage 1. The overall planning for music is weak in Key Stage 2. All pupils are being introduced to units of work that do not challenge them and are more appropriate for younger pupils. However, teachers ensure that pupils follow their instructions and all the pupils participate well including those with special educational needs. The teachers' expectations of behaviour are good; pupils respond well and are keen, interested and listen attentively at all times. Management and control in lessons is good and the pupils concentrate and try to improve their singing.
116. The co-ordinator has been in post for one year only. She is very keen that music is used as a source of enjoyment and a way of raising self-esteem for all pupils. The policy is up-to-date but the school is using a national scheme using units of work meant for younger pupils. The content of the units are not always appropriate, for example, the Year 4 pupils were singing 'Three Blind Mice', to learn about tempo. Resources are satisfactory but there few tuned percussion instruments. Pupils listen to music entering and leaving the hall for assemblies and, during the inspection week, Mozart was 'Composer of the Week'. Hymns and songs in assemblies are chosen carefully so that all pupils can join in. As a result, even the youngest pupils try their best to sing the chorus. There are teachers and assistants with considerable musical ability who play the piano, organise recorder groups and a school choir that results in the pupils singing well together. Visiting teachers give lessons in the violin and clarinet that widen pupils' knowledge of music. Music contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development due to the number of musical activities in school. For example, the school choir takes part in the Medway Schools' Music Festival with pupils singing in the Cathedral and the group was also chosen to sing at a headteachers' conference which broadens pupils' knowledge and experience both musically and socially. This also contributes positively to the pupils' self-esteem.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117. Pupils' standards of attainment in physical education by the end of both key stages is in line with national expectation which is consistent with the findings of the last inspection. Pupils of all ages change into appropriate clothing for physical activity quietly and sensibly. Pupils show an appropriate level of agility, co-ordination and balance for their age. Good progress in skills of ball control, speed and direction is evident as pupils move through the school and their achievement is good.

118. During the inspection, the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Overall, throughout the school, it is very good. Lessons are very well structured and teachers increase the level of challenge as the lessons proceed. Very high expectations are made clear to the pupils before entering the hall or playground and this clearly impacts on the pupils' behaviour and effort. In the lesson judged to be excellent, the teacher inspired the pupils to do their best and his continual praise and modification of pupils' skills resulted in a high level of learning. He drew the pupils' attention to the reasons for exercise and what would happen to their bodies as a result. Pupils listened well and responded with enthusiasm and energy. Pupils in Year 6 have good ball control and good progress is made in all lessons.
119. Pupils in Year 2 throw and catch bean bags and quoits to each other using appropriate body shapes. The teacher emphasises the importance of control so that pupils use equipment sensibly and realise why it is important that you bring your hands to your chest when catching. Constant good demonstration by the teacher enables pupils to work independently when the teacher is not working directly with pupils. Pupils gain skills quickly and work with perseverance.
120. Teachers ensure that a good level of physical activity is maintained in lessons, following appropriate warm up activities. Although the teacher moves around the pupils as they work, helping them to improve their skills, he also makes sure that pupils see good skills being demonstrated by the teacher or by higher attaining pupils in order to consolidate learning. The lessons are very well paced with a slowing down session incorporated into lessons.
121. There is a number of after-school clubs which complement physical education such as netball, football, rounders, dance, cricket and athletics. Teams take part in netball and football tournaments. The school arranges weekly swimming lessons for Key Stage 2 pupils and standards attained in Year 6 are satisfactory for pupils of their age. Pupils experience outdoor and adventurous activities during their residential visit to Arethusa, where they climb, canoe and walk which makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Resources for physical education are very good. Facilities are good as the school has access to the sports hall attached to the local secondary school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Standards of attainment in both key stages do not meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, which is different from the finding of the last inspection which judged standards to be average throughout the school. Pupils are achieving appropriately. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards for their capabilities and receive good support. In Key Stage 1 the younger pupils are developing an understanding of baptism and the role of the vicar in church. Pupils in Year 2 are interested to hear about the important people in the Sikh religion and listen well, although it is clear by their response to the teacher's questioning that their understanding is limited. In Key Stage 2, the work scrutiny shows a good range of work covered, especially in Year 4, where the pupils attempted to search for the similarities and differences between Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism, which they studied during the year. The pupils in Year 6 learn about how the different books of the Bible cover laws, poetry and history but not many pupils had any understanding of why the Bible is important to the people of this country. Very few understand the origin of the name, 'Christianity'.
123. In the lesson observed in Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although the knowledge of the teacher is good, which was evident in her introductory talk to the pupils. An attractive and comprehensive display of holy books and a few artefacts results in the pupils showing an interest and motivation to look at them more closely. The methods used to teach the pupils about the range of the information given in all the books in the Bible did not interest many of the pupils. The majority found the focus of the lesson very difficult and the same four or five pupils answered the teacher's questions continually. Although several very good questions were asked to inspire the pupils to write about the Bible, the opportunity was missed to write them down, for example, using the overhead projector, to give the pupils a firm focus. All of the pupils carried out the same writing task, which did not meet the needs of the average and lower attaining pupils.

124. In Key Stage 1, teaching and learning is good which is an improvement from the last inspection. The method used to teach the pupils about the important people in the Sikh religion is to adopt a story type of introduction using a large poster, which is very appropriate for these young pupils who listen well. The teacher injects a note of reverence when talking about the Sikh holy book and the very special names of the important people. Pupils respond to the task given with enjoyment and effort and produce some sketches of their favourite people, such as Mummy, a brother or their friend. They are able to explain why the people in their drawings are so important to them and the teacher uses their explanations to draw a comparison with why the followers of the Sikh religion believe the Ten Sikh Gurus are so important to them.
125. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about this subject. She is managing a generous budget and resources the subject well for the units of work. All staff were consulted and involved with the development of the new scheme of work, which is based on the authority's Agreed Syllabus. The co-ordinator is given release time to monitor the development of the subject throughout the school and also looks through all the exercise books half-termly which enables her to judge the how pupils make progress. Assessment is carried out satisfactorily by jottings on lesson plans and also in a more formal way on a class sheet termly. There are good links with the local Church, Synagogue and Gurdwara, the vicar takes assemblies occasionally and Christian festivals are celebrated at school. The school choir sang in Rochester Cathedral, which was a very special occasion and had a positive impact on the pupils' learning in religious education. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.