

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OAKLANDS JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Chatham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118437

Headteacher: Les French

Reporting inspector: Brian Espiner  
30600

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> June – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003

Inspection number: 247896

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Weedswood Road Walderslade Chatham
Postcode:	ME5 0QS
Telephone number:	01634 861428
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Derham
Dates of previous inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> –13 <sup>th</sup> June 2001

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
30600	Brian Espiner	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	The parents' summary The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should be done to improve further?
19660	Deborah Pacquette	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
32146	Stephen Hobbs	Team inspector	English Geography History English as an additional language Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?
32123	Penny Price	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oaklands Junior is a mixed community school in Chatham. Pupils live mainly in housing association or former council housing in an estate with an ageing population, so the school's numbers have fallen considerably in the last few years. There are 189 pupils in eight classes. Seven pupils are from ethnic minorities, with no single group dominant. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Fifty-four pupils are entitled to free school meals, an above-average proportion. Sixty-eight pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), an above-average proportion, and four of these have Statements of SEN, again an above-average proportion. Attainment on entry to the school is below average, and with the present Year 6 it was well below average. In 1999 the school was judged to be in need of special measures, and an inspection in 2001 took the school out of this category.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a highly effective school. Overall standards are in line with the national average, and below average in English. Pupils' achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management are very good overall. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding.
- Pupils' achievement is very good, largely because of very effective teaching.
- Attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are all very good. Pupils' initiative and personal responsibility are excellent.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The monitoring of academic and personal development, and educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are all very good.
- The quality of information for parents, particularly about their children's progress, is very good.
- There is a genuine shared commitment to improve and an excellent capacity to succeed.
- There is an excellent reflection of the school's aims and values in its work.

#### **What could be improved**

There are no major areas for improvement. The inspection team is providing the school with some recommendations for minor improvements.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in June 2001, and there were four key issues for action. The first two of these, to carry on improving standards and to improve curriculum balance, have been tackled well. There has been very good improvement in the other two issues, improving teaching and subject leadership. Overall leadership and management were highly effective then, and they still are. There has been a good improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the provision for spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good overall and since the inspection in 1999 it has been excellent.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	E	E	C
mathematics	D	E	B	A
science	C	D	B	A

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

Standards in English are below the national average. Attainment in mathematics and science is average, and in using and applying mathematics and scientific enquiry it is above average. Progress in English is more dependent on what happens at home than it is in the other two core subjects. In discussions with pupils who were heard reading, several said that they had few books of their own at home and many did not use the local library. Although all pupils read every day at school, many do not read every day at home. Until this is changed, there is little chance of standards in English catching up with those in mathematics and science. Not enough music or physical education (PE) was seen to be able to make an overall judgement, although standards in swimming and singing are above national expectations. Standards in all other subjects are in line with expectations and sometimes above. In art, portraiture is particularly good. In design and technology (DT), pupils have a better-than-average understanding of the essential 'plan-do-review' nature of the subject. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards are satisfactory but not enough is being done to use it as a resource in other subjects. Pupils with SEN or with EAL make good progress. For example, almost all pupils are reaching an acceptable standard in science. Over time, standards are rising in line with national trends. Since the present Year 6 entered the school with attainment that was well below average, their achievement has been good in English and very good overall. In agreement with the local education authority (LEA), the school has targets for the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the nationally expected level in English and mathematics. The targets are very challenging and the school is unlikely to reach them this year, especially in English.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils see themselves as part of 'Team Oaklands' and are justifiably proud of their school and their part in it.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is very good. In a fifth of observed lessons, behaviour was recorded as excellent, an unusually high proportion. This is because of the 'team player' ethos and because teachers have very good class management and control.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good. The school has an excellent ethos, ensuring that pupils take the initiative and become responsible and mature.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average and punctuality is good.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

Observed teaching and learning were good, with a great deal that was very good. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory, and this was with a supply teacher on her first, and only, day in the school. Since the progress of the present Year 6 pupils has been very good it can be concluded that, over time, teaching and learning are also very good. During the inspection, the teaching of English was good, and of the related basic skills of literacy it was very good, as literacy is supported very well in other subjects. In mathematics and the related skills of numeracy, teaching was very good, particularly in the important area of using and applying the subject. Class management, control and discipline are universally very good. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of their own learning. They are given the learning objectives at the beginning of every lesson, and are required to comment on their learning at the end of the lesson, sometimes in writing, but always with a system of coloured cards and smiley (or otherwise) faces. Pupils are usually given work that is carefully selected according to their individual needs, based on very good assessment of where they are and what they can do.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is very good. All statutory requirements are met well. The curriculum is broad, balanced, interesting and highly relevant. Extra-curricular activities support and extend learning opportunities very well. All pupils are included fully in all the school's work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good. Individual education plans (IEPs) are well thought-out and updated regularly. The SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) is knowledgeable, dedicated and efficient. Teaching assistants work well with her and with class teachers – a good team.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good in every area and suffuses the life of the school and everyday events. The school is unfortunate in not having many parents and grandparents from different minority cultures but it strives hard to prepare pupils for life in our multi-cultural society, and succeeds.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for monitoring behaviour, promoting the good and eliminating anything oppressive, are excellent. The school's concentration on instilling pride in being part of the team is working extremely well. Assessment and its use in guiding the curriculum is very good.

Annual reports to parents are excellent (amongst the best the inspection team has seen), and the school's links with parents are good, although rather one-sided. Parents' involvement in the work of the school has an impact that is only just satisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an excellent leader and manager. He delegates very well. All staff feel valued, so they work very hard in their own leadership and management roles, where they have a lot of autonomy. The result is a very good cohesive team, working very well together.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and of the very few areas that need improvement. They work hard and fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is excellent. All test results are analysed and targets set for individuals and groups. Lessons are observed by the headteacher and subject leaders. The action taken to meet the school's targets is excellent. This is what has brought the school from 'special measures' to 'very good' in only four years.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning supports the school improvement plan very well. All specific grants are used appropriately. The school finance officer is highly efficient and very competent, and she works very well with the governors' finance committee. The principles of best value (competition, comparison, challenge and consultation) are applied very well.

Staffing matches the demands of the curriculum well, and the recent stability of staff has helped the school to move forward. Accommodation is good overall. Although the flat roofs cause leakage, and need to be replaced, this is counter-balanced by the large school field and wooded, hedgerow and meadow areas. Classrooms are decorated well and the excellent displays produce a welcoming atmosphere and a good environment for learning. Resources are good, in general, and used 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"> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and do their best</li> <li>• The school provides a range of interesting activities outside lessons</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem</li> <li>• Children are making good progress in school</li> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• The teaching is good</li> <li>• Children like school</li> <li>• The school is helping children become mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children do not get the right amount of work to do at home</li> </ul>

The inspection team is pleased to agree with parents' positive comments. Homework is not consistent, and the team is recommending that teachers follow the school's very good homework policy more closely.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. In the 2002 national tests for 11-year-olds, standards were well below the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, standards were average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Standards now are below the national average in English and average in mathematics and science. Pupils' progress is good in English and very good overall, as they enter the school with standards that are generally below or well below average.
2. Speaking and listening skills in Year 6 are in line with national expectations. Pupils listen attentively and speak clearly on a number of subjects. They often give good explanations and express their opinions confidently. For example, they answer questions in geography and history that show their knowledge and understanding to be above that which their writing would suggest. This is because writing skills are below average, and sometimes well below. Handwriting and presentation are variable and sometimes unsatisfactory. Pupils' use and understanding of the technical language of other subjects is good, because teachers give a grid of technical terms at the beginning of each topic in every subject and pupils colour these or tick them when they are confident that they understand. Other subjects support the learning of literacy well. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of general vocabulary and their standards of spelling are below average. Reading standards are also below average. Many pupils read less at home than is usually found in primary schools and generally have fewer books, although this varies widely.
3. Standards in mathematics are broadly in line with the national average and above average in using and applying mathematics, particularly in solving problems. Year 6 pupils use written and mental methods to work out answers in arithmetic. They are beginning to know about and manipulate fractions, decimals and percentages. They have a good understanding of the properties of shape, can draw and interpret a good range of graphs and charts, and find different averages. Standards in mathematics have improved markedly since the last inspection, largely because of very good teaching.
4. In science, standards are in line with the national average, and above average in the knowledge and understanding of scientific enquiry. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of fair testing and experimental design. Raising attainment in scientific enquiry was a school focus at the time of the last inspection and the school has made good progress here as the last inspection team identified inconsistency in this area as a weakness. Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory understanding of forces, including friction and upthrust, and know that force is measured in Newtons. They know about solids, liquids and gases, and are beginning to understand reversible and irreversible changes. They know plant parts and understand pollination. Pupils' progress in science is very good.
5. In ICT, pupils' progress has accelerated since the setting up of the computer suite and the acquisition of a 'smartboard', an interactive white-board that acts as a giant computer for whole-class use. Standards in Year 6 are in line with national expectations. Pupils can put together a very creditable multi-media presentation, send and receive e-mails, and use a spreadsheet to sort and manipulate data. They

can use Logo, a control program, to draw regular polygons, so this helps mathematical understanding as well as developing ICT skills. Overall, however, ICT is not used enough in other subjects, as recognised in the school improvement plan. In Year 3, pupils' knowledge and understanding of databases is above expectations for their age.

6. Standards in art are broadly in line with national expectations, and in portrait construction they are above expectations throughout the school. The school's 'portrait week' certainly helped here, as did the whole-school trip to the National Gallery and Madame Tussaud's. A great deal of good art also resulted from the 'World Tour'. However, apart from 'World Tour' work, there are few large collaborative pieces, fewer than are seen in most schools. In DT, attainment is in line with expectations, and pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the essential plan-do-review nature of the subject. They know several joining techniques and how to use a template. In both art and DT pupils' progress is very good because underlying principles are taught very well.
7. Progress is similarly good or very good in geography, history and religious education (RE), and standards are in line with expectations in all three subjects. Pupils study Christianity throughout the school and one other major religion each year, so their knowledge and understanding of religions are satisfactory and often good. Year 6 pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of mountain regions and can explain the associated technical terms well, including scientific terms and facts associated with altitude. In history, pupils have a good knowledge of chronology and of events, people and changes in the past. They compare the past with the present confidently and enthusiastically.
8. In music and PE not enough was seen to make an overall judgement. However, singing standards are above expectations. Pupils sing strongly, sweetly, enthusiastically and in tune. Swimming records show that standards are above expectations, with almost all pupils able to swim the nationally expected 25 metres unaided and many able to swim further and use several strokes.
9. The progress made by pupils with SEN and EAL is good and this is evident in the standard of work seen during the inspection. This progress was particularly noted in a mathematics lesson where the structured teaching matched the individual education plans related to mental recall of multiplication tables. There is no school register of gifted and talented pupils, but more-able pupils are well challenged and make good progress.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are eager to learn and develop very good attitudes to their learning. They take an active part in classroom discussions and work very well together. Pupils see themselves as part of 'Team Oaklands' and are justifiably proud of their school and their part in it. Overall, pupils are interested in learning and participate very well in the many activities of the school. This includes pupils with SEN and English as an additional language, all of whom have positive attitudes to learning and are integrated very well into the school.
11. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and when moving around the school is very good. In a fifth of observed lessons, behaviour was recorded as excellent. This is partly because of the 'team player' ethos, but mainly because teachers have very good

class management and control. Pupils work very well with others and share equipment very well when required. At break times pupils play very well together and move around the school in an orderly manner. Lunch times are pleasant social occasions. Teachers work successfully with teaching assistants and pupils are very well supported. Parents support the view that the school works hard to promote good behaviour. There are no exclusions at present, although there have been four fixed-term exclusions in the last year. This is a reduction since the last inspection. No incidents of bullying or harassment were observed during the inspection. No litter was seen in the school and most pupils respect and care very well for the school's property and environment. Overall, pupils are very good team players, fully complying with the positive ethos of the school.

12. Pupils in general are very polite, friendly and courteous to visitors, greeting them warmly, holding open doors and offering directions when asked. When invited to do so they speak freely about life in school and willingly share their experiences. Pupils are honest and trustworthy and show very good respect for other's feelings, values and beliefs. All pupils in the school are taught to know the difference between right and wrong and to take responsibility for their own actions through an effective system of rewards and sanctions, which is consistently applied by the staff.
13. The personal and social development of pupils is excellent. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and are encouraged to show initiative and take responsibility including working independently in class. For example, pupils take responsibility for setting up the hall for assembly and operating the equipment, as monitors, ambassadors, house captains, team leaders and school council members. When asked to lead assemblies, work in pairs or in small groups during lessons, pupils do so successfully. They co-operate extremely well with each other and the adults present, and they share resources responsibly. Overall, the school has an excellent ethos, ensuring that pupils take the initiative and become responsible, mature and good citizens.
14. The relationships formed between pupils are very good overall. Pupils are aware of the high expectations of teachers and generally enjoy very good, warm and respectful relationships with adults. The school listens to the pupils and takes their views into account. Pupils co-operate very well with each other and with adults in lessons. They were often observed helping and supporting each other. They also interact very well with each other in the playground, engaging in various games and other social activities.
15. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. However, there is a significant number of unauthorised absences and latecomers to school. Staff and the educational welfare officer closely monitor attendance and comprehensive strategies have been implemented to reduce unauthorised absences and lateness. During the inspection two classes were fighting for the award for best punctuality to the extent that pupils were turning up for registration five minutes early. Attendance is now making a positive contribution to the quality of learning in the school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. Because pupils' progress is very good, it can be concluded that teaching and learning are very good over time. Forty-seven lessons were observed in the inspection. Only one of these was unsatisfactory, and this was given by a supply teacher on her first and only day in the school. Thirty-four lessons (72 per cent) were good or very good,

which represents good progress since the 2001 inspection and excellent improvement since the 1999 inspection, when 40 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

17. There are several reasons for this improvement. Ineffective teachers have gone. The extremely effective monitoring of lessons already started by the headteacher in 2001 and the greater involvement of subject leaders in this monitoring are both bearing fruit. The establishment and embedding of the annual performance-management cycle, with its accent on setting targets for teaching staff and tying these and training needs to the school improvement plan, has also had a good effect. The very good use of assessment, even in subjects like DT where it is often used badly in primary schools, ensures that the needs of groups and individuals are met well. But the major cause of the improvement has been the establishment of an excellent ethos that puts 'Team Oaklands' at the centre of everything. Teachers and teaching assistants are happy to take on more responsibility and work very hard. Subject managers take a pride in their subject and do anything they can to improve its delivery, relevance and enjoyment. Pupils are very proud of the school and their part in it, so they respond well and make it much easier for staff to teach them. They put pressure on others in the class to be real team players and pull their weight, to be participators rather than spectators. The whole thing works very well indeed. Pupils want to please and to succeed, and lessons are rarely interrupted or slowed down by bad behaviour or negative attitudes. Teachers want to make their lessons interesting and give pupils the chance to learn well. Subject and senior managers want to ensure that everything is in place to ensure success. Governors want to do their best to ensure that everything is managed well. Ancillary staff, also proud to be part of the team, oil the wheels and keep the whole machine running smoothly. As a result, learning is very good, and everybody wins. This makes all the team players feel very positive, valued and rewarded for their efforts, and so the school is set on an upward spiral of improvement.
18. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of their own learning. Teachers share the learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson and pupils know exactly what they have to do. The objectives are revisited at the end of the lesson and often at appropriate times during the lesson itself in order for pupils to focus more clearly on the main purpose of what they are doing. Teachers often use the word "focus" (as a noun or an imperative) to good effect. At the end of the lesson pupils are asked to show a green, amber or red card to indicate how they think their learning has progressed, and a smiley, straight-mouthed or sad face to show how they feel about that. They are often asked to comment on their learning in words.
19. Teachers manage classes very well and there are few discipline problems. Relationships are very good and pupils want to please their teachers and teaching assistants, so they work hard and lessons have a good pace. Teachers have a good subject knowledge. Lessons are interesting and pupils concentrate. They are given good opportunities to be independent and responsible; for example, in designing their own science experiments or DT projects. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Teachers plan well in year groups, and use assessment well to give the correct work to groups and individuals according to their needs. Teaching methods are effective and pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good and often very good.
20. There are some areas of teaching and learning that could be improved. Homework, although it is satisfactory overall, is inconsistent from one class to another and sometimes more-able pupils are not challenged enough by it. Marking is also satisfactory, but again there is an inconsistency. Some teachers take the opportunity

to make helpful suggestions for improvement or short-term targets, but sometimes marking is little more than ticks and encouraging remarks. The marking policy does not emphasise that written comments should be made whenever they will be useful. The homework policy is very good, emphasising the responsibility of the pupil as a team player and indicating rewards and sanctions based on this concept. However, not all teachers always ensure that all pupils have the recommended amount of homework every week. It must be said that a lot of homework is reading, and it is up to pupils and parents to make sure that this is done regularly.

21. One very good lesson serves as an exemplar of what the school is doing right. In a Year 6 ICT lesson, pupils were extending their knowledge, understanding and skills in using 'Powerpoint' to link slides in a multi-media presentation. Using the 'smartboard', the teacher demonstrated her own very good subject knowledge in quickly revising the processes of changing backgrounds and using special effects, and introducing some new ones. The pupils themselves took turns to use the smartboard. They then were paired, more-able with less-able, to use a computer to make their own slide-show, using different software for headlines, graphics and word processing using bullet points. They chose subjects to do with the school, such as 'Sports Day' and 'Mr French'. Some imported moving images, and standards in general were above average for their age. Very good planning ensured that the lesson was interesting and challenging. The teacher's own enthusiasm was caught by the pupils. They enjoyed the responsibility of experimenting with different effects, secure and confident in the knowledge that they could undo mistakes, and happy to be able to introduce some humour. The result was very good learning. All of these qualities were seen in other lessons throughout the school.

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

22. The curricular opportunities provided for pupils are very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum was considered broad but not appropriately balanced. All subjects now receive an appropriate amount of time and the input of subject coordinators in writing the long-term and medium-term plans for their subject ensures pupils make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. The school day has been reorganised and this means very effective use is made of the time available. For instance, English and mathematics lessons do not over-run and more time is available for teaching other subjects in the curriculum. The school curriculum not only meets all the statutory requirements and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for RE but makes appropriate links between subjects and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
23. The curriculum is constantly being monitored by the curriculum coordinator and subject coordinators who have responsibility for raising standards. This means that the range and quality of learning experiences are continually being improved. It also ensures the curriculum is very relevant and interesting for pupils. The breadth of the curriculum is at least satisfactory in all subjects but provision in mathematics, English and science is better. At present the school recognises the need to improve teachers' subject knowledge in music so the quality of musical activities provided in lessons can improve. More opportunities are also needed to use ICT skills in other subjects.
24. The National Literacy Strategy is well established and literacy skills including reading, writing and speaking and listening are very effectively developed in other subjects.

Specific technical vocabulary relevant to each subject is introduced in every unit of work and this raises pupils' expectations and achievement. There are very effective strategies for teaching numeracy skills but more opportunities could be found to practise these in other subjects.

25. Provision for extra-curricular activities has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. A very wide range of school clubs, including sport, music, craft, homework, gardening, computing, first aid and Spanish, held at different times during the day and offered to boys and girls, are well attended and valued by pupils. The library is available to pupils at break times and after school. Year 6 pupils have access to the computer suite a few times each week but as yet these facilities are not used after school. Pupils visit well-chosen places of interest and this supports their learning in subjects such as science, geography, history and PE. A recent whole-school visit to Madame Tussaud's and the National Gallery greatly enhanced pupils' personal and cultural development as well as their learning in art. Activity weeks held each term, such as the Art Week or 'World Tour' Week, extend learning opportunities very well.
26. All pupils are included fully in all the school's works. Pupils in the same year group receive the same opportunities in lessons regardless of which class they are in because staff plan together. The good use of assessment ensures that the curriculum is being adapted to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils. Planning is very effective because teachers share expertise. The school places a strong emphasis on citizenship and this encourages all pupils to take responsibility for various jobs around school.
27. The provision for pupils with SEN is good. Pupils are well supported by competent teaching assistants and cope well in class. Each pupil has a very well produced individual education plan which sets out clear targets of learning for the pupils and allows for their involvement in its production. These plans are regularly reviewed by the SENCO and class teachers. The SENCO is the gateway to the good provision of SEN in the school and manages special needs very well. There is a good policy and monitoring takes place regularly. There are good links with outside agencies. The SEN governor plays an active part in ensuring that pupils with SEN are supported well. She believes in promoting inclusion and supports the work of the SENCO. She visits the school regularly as part of her role and reports back to the whole governing body. The school has identified that resources for SEN need updating, especially for speech and language.
28. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their personal and social skills in lessons, as well as through membership of the school community. For instance, when the school council identified the need for more playground equipment, the school organised a fair and raised £200. Year 6 pupils decided on and bought play equipment and wrote a contract for pupils to sign if they wanted to play with it. An effective planned programme for PSHE lessons provides good coverage for all aspects of the curriculum including sex and drugs education. Circle time ensures important issues relating to the whole school or particular classes are discussed as necessary.
29. The school has satisfactory links with the local schools that pupils have attended or are going to attend. At present a joint science project with the infant school is helping to improve these. Year 6 pupils have the right to attend the relevant taster day at their chosen secondary school.



30. Links with the local community make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. For example, Year 5 pupils perform plays in the Guildhall museum and other pupils take part in the local Medway Swimming Festival. However, opportunities to take part in local sporting events are not always taken up. Regular opportunities are set aside for visitors to speak to pupils in the community assembly and these make pupils more aware of local issues. Parents are supportive of the school but their contribution to their children's learning is still at an early stage of development. Links with the wider community such as linking with a school in America have begun. The school makes good use of staff from other countries to enhance the learning opportunities provided.
31. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It is central to the life of the school and everyday events. The ethos of the school is based on values where everyone is a team player and the individual child is respected and trusted. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection.
32. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. A good contribution is made to pupils' spiritual development in assemblies where opportunities are made for quiet reflection. RE lessons also give opportunities for pupils to develop spirituality. A Year 4 child writes, "God is a spirit that lives in the sky and looks down on us." The school has developed a climate in which all their pupils can grow and flourish, respect each other and be respected. Events such as the Sports Day medal assembly and the weekly headteacher's Tea Party create a very special atmosphere in which pupils feel valued.
33. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a very effective behaviour policy that provides a clear moral code and is consistently promoted in all aspects of the school. Staff are very good role-models for pupils, showing respect and fairness in their relationships with others. Displays throughout the school consistently reinforce school rules and values as well as providing guidance about bullying. Lunchtime awards and gold star awards provide pupils with a strong message about what the school values in terms of achievement, behaviour and attitudes. An excellent opportunity is provided for the school community to discuss human rights when three pupils return from attending the Commonwealth Day Service in Westminster Abbey with the headteacher.
34. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and is reflected in the very good quality of the relationships that exist in school. Strengths in the provision include a high expectation that pupils will co-operate and "focus" on trying to do their best in all activities. During lessons pupils are provided with many opportunities to work effectively in pairs and small groups. A wide range of positive whole-school experiences, including visits, activity weeks and school productions are provided. Pupils are given responsibility for running many aspects of the school, such as leading assemblies, being monitors and ambassadors or representing their class on the school council. All pupils are members of a house. There is a very strong sense of community.
35. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils learn about aspects of their own culture through lessons; for example, when pupils learn about changes in culture since the 1930s in history. The school provides additional opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular clubs and organises visits and visitors to extend pupils' cultural awareness. The "Weedswood Garden" grown by the gardening club, is full of the wildflowers that the local streets are named after. The school makes a point of celebrating special events in our culture and these contribute substantially to pupils' learning experiences. For example, all pupils stood in the

forecourt of Buckingham Palace to watch the changing of the guard a week before the Queen's Golden Jubilee and then celebrated at school by having a street party. The school is unfortunate in not having many parents and grandparents from different cultures, but it strives hard to prepare pupils for life in our multi-cultural society, and succeeds. Pupils are introduced to different religions and cultures through religious education, music, art, geography, history and literature.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

36. The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. There is a staff member with overall responsibility for child protection and all members of the staff team are aware of lines of accountability. Procedures are well established and clear guidelines are available to all staff. Members of staff know their pupils very well and they are genuinely interested in the pupils' welfare. There are very good measures in place to ensure that pupils are well cared for and supervised during the entire school day. The school offers very good pastoral care and helps pupils to settle into school life. In addition, the school provides very good extra-curricular activities that enhance pupils' learning. The provision for medical care and first aid is very good. The school works closely with the school nurse who visits the school regularly to ensure the health needs of all pupils are met. Routine checks and risk assessments of the school premises are carried out regularly and health hazards are quickly identified. A rolling programme of maintenance is in place and this is effectively implemented.
37. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The school uses very effective strategies to promote good attendance; for example, facilities for parents to e-mail their children's absences, late book signing and certificates and cups for good levels of attendance and punctuality. The importance of good attendance and being punctual is also promoted through assemblies, newsletters and regular meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer and parents.
38. There is good provision for pupils with statutory statements for SEN through inclusion in classes with the necessary support from the teacher, teaching assistants and SENCO. There is good provision for pupils with EAL. Pupils are supported by the LEA, which provides a teacher for EAL, and by good support in class. The competence and effectiveness of the SENCO ensures that any future provision will be effective.
39. The school has excellent procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and to eliminate oppressive behaviour. These have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. The school concentrates on instilling pride in being part of the team. This is working extremely well. The school uses strategies such as the team players' checklist, which gives pupils time for reflection and an opportunity to evaluate their behaviour. Other initiatives used to build self-esteem and promote positive attitudes and behaviour include team player reward afternoons and 'team player plus'. These programmes are extremely successful. In addition, the school has clear and effective systems for rewarding good behaviour and sanctioning unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons. Self discipline and inclusion are also promoted through one-to-one discussions, comprehensive individual education plans and working in partnership with parents.
40. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. All pupils are encouraged to be fully involved in the classroom and in play activities outside. Pupils' educational and personal development is also developed

through personal and social education, games, music, assemblies and the school's behaviour policy. Pupils are given learning objectives at the beginning of lessons and are required to comment on their learning by the end of the lesson, for example, with smiley faces. Pupils with SEN are identified early and given very good support by teaching assistants who are very well trained and, as a result, they make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. Very good support is also given to the pupils who have English as an additional language and similar good progress is made.

41. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. This involves both teacher assessment in all subjects and the use of optional national tests for English, mathematics and science in Years 3, 4, 5. The results of these tests are recorded and used very carefully to track the progress of each pupil in English, mathematics and science. This information is used very well to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and to help identify specific targets for groups and individuals. Teaching assistants provide good support for groups of pupils who need extra help in mathematics and English. There is a good range of schemes to support pupils, including additional literacy support, Year 6 booster classes and a homework club. All these initiatives help raise pupils' confidence and boost their progress.
42. Consistent and informative records of assessment are produced in all subjects, based on the government recommended 'best fit' model and the assessment of key objectives. The co-ordinator for each subject uses this information well, evaluating the curriculum provided and making improvements in planning. This has been particularly successful in DT, ICT, RE and PE. It also means that skills progression is assured.
43. Teachers' marking is of satisfactory quality and related to the learning objective but it does not always clearly guide the pupil on how to improve his or her work. Examples of best practice exist in the school and ways need to be found to share this. However, very clear targets for English and mathematics are displayed in all classrooms and these help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers provide very good support for pupils, ensuring that they set their own individual targets and evaluate their own progress. Very useful comments made by teachers and teaching assistants in class help pupils to understand the task, recognise their achievements and enable them to make progress. Pupils' achievements are celebrated very well through the very attractive displays of work in classrooms and numerous awards given.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

44. Parents' views of the school are satisfactory overall. Two parents attended the Parents' Evening and both felt that standards had risen. The parents' questionnaire indicates that most parents are pleased with the progress their children are making.
45. The school's links with parents are effective. The school continues to work hard to improve its communication with parents and to provide opportunities for them to work in partnership for the benefit of the pupils. The school sends parents a questionnaire to find out their opinions and wishes on certain issues. The level of response from parents is good. Parents feel welcome in the school and that they are listened to. They feel encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school. Most parents are happy with the daily activities of the school and the open-door policy that operates. However, not all parents respond to this open-door policy. There are vacancies on the governing body for parent governors.

46. The impact of parental involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Parents participate in the celebration of events in the school and enjoy seeing their children perform. The school has taken effective steps to encourage wider parental involvement. There is a parent-teacher association, The Friends of Oaklands School Association, which is successful in fundraising and organising social events.
47. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress, is very good. Parents receive regular newsletters, which include a programme of events for the term as well as summaries of what pupils are doing. Newsletters are well designed and comprehensive. In addition, parents are kept informed via the school's Website and e-mail facilities. Parents' meetings are organised regularly to keep parents fully informed of new initiatives and their children's progress. Annual pupils' reports, which are given to parents about their children's progress, are excellent. They give detailed information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements.
48. The parental contribution to pupils' learning at school and home is satisfactory. It consists mainly of a few supportive parents helping in the school, reading-diaries, homework schemes and occasional work with parents. Currently, not all parents use the home/school schemes. Parents who have children with SEN are sent their children's individual education plans. They comment on these before returning them to the school. Subsequently, parents are kept informed of their children's progress at consultation evenings and other meetings as necessary. They are informed and invited to annual reviews and their views are taken into account.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

49. The headteacher is an excellent leader with a very clear vision that has allowed the school to move forward since the last inspection. His vision not only encompasses the need for academic success but the philosophy of developing the whole child. Preparing pupils for future citizenship and ensuring they have the right values and attitudes to succeed is his utmost priority. It is very evident that every pupil, governor and member of staff is a member of the team in this mutually caring atmosphere.
50. Excellent teamwork is key to the management of the school. There is a real shared commitment to improve and an excellent capacity to succeed. The headteacher delegates responsibility very well, ensuring the contribution of all members of staff as well as the senior management team. The school improvement plan has become a corporate tool involving all staff and the governing body. Subject leaders produce annual subject development plans. The school has seriously considered its priorities for development since the last inspection and the very good school improvement plan contains these priorities and targets. The school recognises the need to develop the pupils' writing skills, ICT and music.
51. The headteacher's monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are outstanding. Lesson observations show clear understanding of educational principles and highlight teachers' strengths and areas for development, giving unambiguous targets for developing teaching skills. Other members of staff are given the time to monitor and report back on their subject areas and allow curriculum development to take place. The headteacher has weekly meetings with pupils (The Head's Tea Party) where invited pupils from every class are allowed to share their work with him

and their peers. This gives him an up-to-date understanding of the state of the school and takes pupils' views into account very well.

52. The school has set ambitious but realistic targets for overall improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge has been improved with in-service training through staff meetings and LEA input. Data has been analysed very well and used to set a specific focus for improvement.
53. Governors are hard working and dedicated. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the school improvement plan, and fulfil their duties well. They have an unusual but effective committee structure that ensures that all governors are fully involved. Because their numbers are small, all governors are members of all committees. There are plans for every governor to be attached to one or two curricular areas. At the moment there are too few parent governors, and the school is seeking to recruit more.
54. Financial planning supports educational priorities very well. The highly competent school finance officer is clerk to the governors and works closely with the finance committee. All grants are used well for their designated purposes. Every item in the school improvement plan is carefully costed and evaluated to ensure that the principles of best value (competition, comparison, challenge and consultation) are applied very well. For example, the headteacher and staff are analysing the contribution to pupils' progress made by the recent acquisition of the interactive white-board and projector. The LEA has an unusual method of financial auditing that relies to a large extent on school self-audit of different parts of the budget every year, and the school has not had a complete LEA audit since Medway became a unitary authority. The financial affairs of the school have only recently been computerised, and the use of new technology in management is now satisfactory, although at the time of the inspection the school office was unable to print e-mail attachments.
55. Staffing matches the demands of the curriculum well. The headteacher has stabilised his teaching staff and increased the numbers applying for posts by giving each teacher the exclusive use of a laptop computer and non-contact time each week to enable better planning and reduce pressure. New staff are inducted well into the team ethos. The school is successfully training a teacher in a school-centred partnership with South Bank University. It is also arranging for qualified teacher status for a teacher trained in South Africa, and provides places for initial teacher training students from Christchurch University College in Canterbury.
56. The annual cycle of performance management is fully in place for teaching staff and there is planned development for the formal appraisal of teaching assistants who, at present, have annual interviews. A teaching assistant portfolio has been set up for those supporting SEN pupils. Provision for pupils with SEN is assured by the competent management of the SENCO, who works very well as an integral part of the team.
57. Accommodation is good overall. Although the main entrance is very unattractive and badly needs redevelopment, the school does its best with displays to make it attractive and welcoming. The school's flat roof continually leaks and needs replacing. Local repairs only shift the leak from one part of the school to another. At the time of the inspection, the main leak was in the headteacher's office, directly above his chair. However, these drawbacks are compensated for by beautiful and extensive grounds, shared with the feeder infant school. The grounds include a field large enough to contain a 100-metre sprint track, 80-metres hurdles, a throwing area

and a 400-metre middle-distance track, facilities not usually encountered until secondary school. There is a basketball court, good hard-play areas, a picnic area, a wood, hedgerow and meadow. A newly-enclosed undercroft makes it possible for pupils to move around the school without getting rained on. The hall is very large. Classrooms are decorated in individual colours, including furniture, and this provides a very attractive environment, further enhanced by excellent displays that have a very positive effect on learning.

58. Learning resources are good in most subjects, and never less than satisfactory. The library is well stocked and well used, and the librarian is an asset to the school, often doubling as a teaching assistant and using library resources well. There is a lack of computer software in some subjects, and this is inhibiting the use of ICT throughout the curriculum. In art and DT there is a shortage of scrap material. In music, there is a need for more CDs and multi-cultural instruments. There is also a shortage of English resources for pupils with SEN.
59. The school has laudable aims and values. All pupils are valued and cherished, and know that they are part of 'Team Oaklands'. In lessons and around the school, they are continually reminded to be participators rather than spectators, and they are always given responsibility for not letting the team down. This works extremely well, and there is an excellent reflection of the school's aims and values in its work.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

60. There are no major recommendations. However, the inspection team would like the school to consider the following:-
- continue to raise standards in English, particularly writing, in order to approach the standards achieved in mathematics and science; (paragraphs 1, 2, 50, 61, 64, 65)
  - continue to extend the use of ICT in other subjects; (paragraphs 5, 23, 50, 69, 75, 80, 84, 94, 99, 108)
  - rewrite the school's marking policy to emphasise the use of written suggestions for improvement; (paragraphs 20, 43, 66, 73, 79)
  - ensure that staff follow the school's homework policy more closely, so that homework is used more consistently from class to class; (paragraphs 20, 66, 73)
  - re-double efforts to increase the number of parent governors; (paragraphs 45, 53)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	100+

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	16	18	12	1	0	0
Percentage	0	34	38	26	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	189
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	52

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	68

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

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



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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	36	34	70

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	27	34
	Girls	23	27	32
	Total	46	54	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (55)	77 (48)	94 (80)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	36	33
	Girls	26	25	32
	Total	49	51	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (59)	73 (57)	93 (77)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	182	4	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.6
Average class size	23.6

### Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	113

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2002-3
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	£
Total income	579821
Total expenditure	574822
Expenditure per pupil	2843
Balance brought forward from previous year	28561
Balance carried forward to next year	33560

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	189
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.	43	45	7	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	50	2	5	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	55	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	39	34	2	7
The teaching is good.	39	50	7	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	52	9	9	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	2	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	43	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	57	7	11	0
The school is well led and managed.	41	48	5	5	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	52	5	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	43	5	0	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

61. Standards in English are below average for typical 11-year-olds nationally. Compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment is broadly average for reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, as pupils entered the school with well below average standards, their progress has been good. No measurable difference was seen between the attainment of girls and boys.
62. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations. They speak clearly, listen attentively, and demonstrate an ability to listen with concentration and speak in a range of contexts. For example, when speaking about their visit to Madame Tussaud's, they gave good explanations and descriptions expressing their opinions. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and each other, pose sensible questions about what they have heard and respond well to instructions. They make particularly good use of specialist and technical language, observed in a range of subjects including mathematics, history, geography, DT and science; for example, when pupils evaluate what they have learned.
63. Overall, standards in reading are below the national average. By the age of eleven, pupils are independent, fairly competent readers, but even the most confident sometimes lack fluency and expression when reading aloud. They enjoy reading a suitable range of narrative, informative and poetry books and are beginning to be familiar with particular authors. Pupils understand the main points of their chosen stories and can talk about characters, expressing their preferences. They use suitable research skills to find information from books for their chosen topics. The number of books read at home varies but, in general, is less than that found in most schools. In Year 6, some pupils have a considerable repertoire. Their fluency, knowledge of grammar and comprehension skills are noticeably better than those of most pupils. In some year groups reading is poor and the standards of the sample heard reading were below the expectations for their age. There is a good range of books at the school including a mixed genre for guided reading. There is a well-used school library run efficiently by the competent and enthusiastic school librarian, who also acts as a teaching assistant when linked to library activities.
64. Pupils' standards in writing are below the national average. They produce narrative accounts, stories and writing for a suitable range of purposes. Progress in writing is good overall and standards are improving. In a Year 4 class the pupils were making good progress. When evaluating how to improve another's story, pupils said  
"She could use more powerful words!" and  
" I liked the use of the alliteration 'slithering snake'".
65. The school recognises the need to improve handwriting, which varies in standard throughout the school. There are various styles of handwriting seen; for example, in the formation of the letter 'g', which some write in cursive style and others not. The presentation of work varies greatly, especially with the use of the ruler, and a consistency across the school has not been established.
66. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English during the inspection. The planning of lessons, which follow the National Literacy Strategy, is very good. Pupils are given clear, specific learning objectives and how to achieve them. Teachers identify how the lesson will meet the needs of

individual groups of pupils and evaluate their performance. Teaching strategies are very good. In one Year 5 lesson, related to a group reading text from "The Suitcase Kid" by Jacqueline Wilson, the class was asked to identify 'opinions' and the name of the character expressing that opinion. The class wrote the names of the characters on card and then showed the card to the teacher when she asked which character made the statement. All pupils were keen to participate enthusiastically and those who were unsure quickly learned from the activity. The pace of many lessons seen was brisk, so pupils were interested and involved. At the beginning of lessons, teachers recall previous learning and assess the pupils' learning needs. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs. In one Year 6 class, the pupils worked well in pairs to analyse formal and informal text of different types of invitations to a birthday party. The pupils showed a good understanding of the task involved and achieved the learning objective that was reiterated clearly by the teacher many times during the lesson. Finally, the pupils in each group were asked to cut and paste the main features of formal/informal writing on a class sheet. All pupils of varying abilities were able to complete the task with the help of the teacher and teaching assistant. Teachers also make good use of drama and role-play in their lessons. In one Year 5 lesson the pupils were asked to play out the roles of book characters in a 'Kilroy' -type TV programme. The teacher took on the role of Kilroy and promoted speaking and listening skills well. The use of homework and teachers' marking could be improved, although both are satisfactory overall. The amount of homework given is too variable from class-to-class and from pupil-to-pupil, and marking does not always give suggestions for improvement.

67. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and this is having a marked effect on progress. They are very keen to participate in the lesson and use strategies, enabled by teachers, for self-assessment. This also allows teachers to identify pupils who need their understanding reinforced. Self-assessment of learning is a key feature in every lesson.
68. Pupils with varying degrees of SEN were successfully included in all observed lessons. This was because of the good policy for including these pupils and the expertise of the teaching assistants supporting them. In most lessons seen, the teaching assistant was actively engaged in supporting these pupils. In one Year 5 lesson, the teaching assistant became a real aid to the teacher and the whole class. She wrote key vocabulary on the whiteboard as the teacher spoke to the class as well as monitoring those pupils needing help or not concentrating totally, using appropriate non-verbal communication. The work of the pupils who she supported was of a high standard, given their individual needs.
69. The management of English is good. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of what is needed to improve standards. There are detailed development plans for the subject and areas for further development have been identified through the excellent monitoring system established in the school; for example, ICT is not used enough. Regular reports are made to the staff and governors, and cross-curricular elements of topics (for example, the 'World Tour' project) are broken down and analysed for strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Accommodation is good, and the library is an attractive and well-used area. The competent and enthusiastic librarian is an asset to the school, often acting as a teaching assistant to take small groups and use the library resources, including prints of pictures. She provides music in the library at lunchtime, and pupils really enjoy being there, as the atmosphere is far from staid. Resources are generally good, although more resources are needed to support language development for pupils with SEN.

## MATHEMATICS

70. There is a very marked improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection. Standards are now at the expected levels for 11-year-olds and above average in using and applying mathematics. Pupils achieve very well. This is a result of very good teaching, the focus on problem solving in every lesson and the very effective leadership and management of the subject. Pupils are very well informed about their own learning and they know exactly what they have to do to improve. There is no noticeable difference in attainment between boys and girls. The school has very effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. It makes very good use of the information from national tests and teacher assessments to provide challenging work that meets pupils' differing needs and interests in all year groups.
71. Pupils enter the school in Year 3 with below average skills in mathematics. However, pupils in the present Year 6 entered the school with skills well below average. By Year 6, the whole-school approach to teaching problem solving alongside number, shape and space, measures and data handling ensures that most pupils have very secure skills in their ability to use and apply mathematics. Pupils can use written or mental methods when adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing numbers. They understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages and have a good understanding of the properties of shape. A recent focus on teaching the specific skills necessary to interpret graphs has led to an improvement in standards in this area of mathematics. Pupils can now interpret a range of graphs, including pie charts, and find the mode and mean. The whole-school 'tables challenge' ensures that pupils recall the times-tables facts quickly and accurately.
72. All pupils achieve very well overall. Pupils with SEN and English as an additional language make very good progress because they are well supported by teaching assistants and the teaching methods used. An example of this was when a teaching assistant in Year 5 drew pupils' attention to the pattern between the number of sides, angles and lines of symmetry in regular 2-dimensional shapes. More-able pupils make very good progress because they are very well challenged to achieve the higher levels in the curriculum, particularly through investigative and problem-solving work. For example, more-able pupils are able to disprove the statement, "It is easier to order fractions than decimals or percentages." Average and just-below average pupils make very good progress because teachers explain and model appropriate strategies very well. For example, a Year 5 teacher effectively modelled how to find systematically all the lines of symmetry in a regular pentagon. Occasionally, just-below average pupils need to consolidate their understanding before moving on to new methods and average pupils need to be given more challenging activities. The school recognises the need to make better use of number lines to help pupils understand the number system, particularly decimals and fractions as well as a means of calculating or solving number problems.
73. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very high expectations and a very thorough subject knowledge, and use a very wide range of practical teaching methods which motivate pupils and ensure that everyone takes part. As a result, pupils work very creatively, productively and independently, concentrating on their work throughout the lesson. Planning is very effective because it provides clear steps for all abilities and is based on best practice from the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons are brisk and carefully structured so that mental warm-up games at the beginning of the lesson focus pupils' attention on the relevant skills needed later. Most teachers make very effective use of questioning to assess learning and correct pupils' misconceptions throughout the lesson as well as at the end. This means that teaching matches the

needs of pupils very well. Pupils are continually asked to assess their own understanding, by showing 'traffic lights' and commenting on whether they think that they have achieved the learning objective at the end of lessons. Consequently, pupils have an excellent knowledge of their own learning. Pupils know what they have to do to improve because all classes display, for different groups, mathematical targets that identify the specific skills and knowledge that they need to be able to use. The use of homework is inconsistent from class to class and more-able pupils are sometimes not given enough. Work is marked conscientiously, but sometimes marking is just a series of ticks with a sticker for encouragement, with no short-term target for improvement.

74. Pupils have very positive attitudes to mathematics because they are provided with an exciting range of learning activities that appeal to their interests. For instance, Year 3 pupils made good use of a calendar to investigate their birthdays. Many activities require pupils to make decisions and work together in pairs or small groups, organising their work, talking and sharing ideas. For example, Year 4 pupils worked very well in pairs making up number sentences when investigating different ways to group a set of 29 cubes. This makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development.
75. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective because the mathematics co-ordinator works very closely with the headteacher and SENCO to ensure that all aspects are covered. Areas for development are quickly identified and the whole-school team approach ensures that more effective and consistent approaches are successfully implemented by all teachers and teaching assistants. This has a very positive impact on standards. The use of ICT in mathematics lessons is at an early stage of development and the school recognises the need to extend this. The use of mathematics in other subjects is satisfactory but further opportunities to develop its use could be found. Resources are good and well used.

## **SCIENCE**

76. In the present Year 6, standards in science are in line with the national average, and above average in the important area of scientific enquiry. Their attainment was well below average on entry to the school, so their progress has been very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, and a significant improvement since the 1999 inspection.
77. Pupils have a very good understanding of what constitutes a fair test. As they move through the school they are guided towards making more and more decisions about designing experiments, and by the end of Year 6 they have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of isolating parameters and repeating certain processes. More-able pupils are rightly given less help with their experimental design. This emphasis on experimentation is increasing pupils' powers of decision-making and improving initiative and responsibility.
78. All Year 6 pupils use tree diagrams to categorise. Almost all understand about food chains, habitats, plant parts, pollination and parts of the human body such as the heart. Some have studied the eye. Pupils understand that forces are measured in Newtons and how to measure them with a Newton meter, and have studied friction and upthrust as examples. They have looked at magnetism, simple electrical circuits, heat and light. Pupils have studied solids, liquids and gases and know that evaporation, melting and freezing are reversible changes but that some chemical processes, such as baking a cake, are irreversible.



79. Teaching and learning are very good over time, reflected in pupils' very good achievement. Teachers' marking of work is satisfactory overall but variable, as teachers do not always give suggestions to pupils to enable them to improve. During the inspection, most lessons were good. Class management is particularly good, with well-understood requests to focus and be participators rather than spectators. All lessons begin with pupils being told what they are going to learn, and at the end they are asked if they have learned it and if they are happy about that. Consequently, they have an excellent knowledge of their own learning. Lessons were seen in Years 4, 5 and 6 specifically concerning experimental design. These showed good planning over time, in that as pupils matured more was expected of them. It also showed good planning for pupils of the same age. In a good lesson in Year 5, pupils had to design an experiment to see if exercise periods of different lengths produced different changes in their pulse-rates. The teacher asked probing and interesting questions, especially about their predictions. Whilst most pupils were predicting that pulse rate would rise with longer exercise, they were asked if this would go on forever. Some were predicting that pulse-rate would not rise because they knew that it would go down again with rest. The discussion was interesting and thought-provoking, and the teacher handled it very well.
80. The subject is managed very well by the competent and enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has taken the government-recommended scheme of work and changed it to suit the school and place more emphasis on practical activities. Assessment is good. Teachers use the government-recommended system of assessing key objectives and this is used to direct activities to different groups and individuals in order to meet their needs. Resources are satisfactory, although more software is needed in order to use ICT more in the subject, where it is underused, and more books are needed in Year 3.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

81. Attainment in art is in line with national expectations, and in portraiture it is above average throughout the school. During an art week when every afternoon was given over to art, every class had concentrated on producing portraits, learning where facial features and body parts actually are in relation to each other and their relative sizes. This was a good investment in time, and some of the portraits around the school and in the co-ordinator's photographic record are very good indeed. The school followed this up by taking all the pupils to Madame Tussaud's and the National Gallery. Some of the work resulting from this was connected very well to Tudor history and the portraits of the time, especially by Holbein. His painting 'The Ambassadors' formed a very good focus and starting point for work in two good Year 4 lessons seen during the inspection.
82. Another big spur to good art work was the 'World Tour' event, in which each class took one country and looked at its art, geography and way of life for inspiration. For example, on one of the landings, visitors walk through the tissue-paper sea-weed and paper fish of the Great Barrier Reef, and on another there is a display of South African masks, shields and pictures of animals. This has worked very well to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Pupils also look at the work of famous artists for inspiration. Year 6 sketchbooks showed a comparison between Turner and Constable. Displays around the school showed the influence of Mondrian, Hockney and the illustrator Quentin Blake. Pupils use a wide range of materials in 2-dimensional work, including all the different hardnesses of pencils. They also make

clay models, and Year 6 pupils reported using plasticene to plan these. Pupils' progress is very good.

83. Teaching and learning are very good, reflected in pupils' progress over time. Observed lessons were all good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic. Resources are used well. In one lesson, Year 5 pupils were using postcards and posters from the National Gallery to explore the work of Van Gogh, Seurat, Rousseau and Monet. They copied a small piece of one painting and then extended it in any way they wanted. This is another example of developing pupils' sense of responsibility and initiative. If they were not confident enough, they could have just copied the original, so they felt secure. However, very few chose to do this, as they enjoyed the challenge to be creative.
84. The subject is managed very well by the knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator, who monitors lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work. The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting, and it places a good emphasis on teaching the skills of drawing, colouring and shading. Resources are good overall, although there is a shortage of scrap material, and the school is seeking ways of improving its range and quality. There are plans to increase the use of ICT, as the school recognises that it is not used enough. Art is used very well to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

85. No lessons were seen, so judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and talking to pupils and staff.
86. Standards in DT are in line with the national expectation. In the very important plan-do-review design process, attainment is above average. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of refining a design in order that the product is fit for the desired purpose. They make suggestions for improvement after reviewing what they are doing. This is planned into the curriculum well and its evolution can be seen clearly from year to year.
87. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their work in the subject. They had enjoyed all their projects, which included making shelters for plants, slippers, and their current project on hats. There was some confusion as to whether this was art or DT. They could not recall having done much work in wood, although they had investigated methods of joining including reinforced corners and using a hot-glue gun. The slippers, of good quality, were displayed in classrooms, and the planning process detailed in workbooks. Some good examples of DT work from the 'World Tour' week were Italian menus and card-and-paperclip moving Pinocchios. The workbooks are carried from year to year and good progress can be seen. Food technology is not neglected, although no evidence could be found of cooking except bread making. Other examples, such as sandwich design, were all cold food. But there were many examples from the government recommended scheme of work; for example, packaging and nets of boxes in Year 3; torches, Easter cards and money containers in Year 4; and musical instruments in Year 5. Making skills are satisfactory.
88. Since no lessons were seen, it is impossible to judge teaching and learning from observation. However, the standard of work indicates that teaching and learning are very good, particularly in the concentration on the underlying process. Assessment is very good, based on the government recommended system. It is used to target work to groups and individuals of different abilities very well. Less-able pupils are put into

larger groups so that they have more ideas collectively, and teachers have different, but accurate and good, expectations of different pupils in the way that they design and review.

89. Subject management is very good. The co-ordinator monitors lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work and progress. Resources are satisfactory, but the school needs a larger quantity and range of scrap materials, as it does in art.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

90. Standards in both geography and history are in line with national expectations for 11-year-olds. The judgement is formed by observations of geography and history lessons in most year groups and a thorough analysis of pupils' work, displays and teachers' planning. All pupils make good progress. Pupils with SEN are supported well by the teaching assistants and this helps to consolidate their achievement over time and their progress in individual lessons. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
91. The school runs two programmes of study for each year group per year but has also incorporated further work into its 'World Tour' project. Pupils in Year 6 show good knowledge and understanding of places and environments linked to their topic on mountainous areas. In one lesson the pupils were able to recall previous learning by identifying the key features of mountainous areas, such as 'peak', 'ridge', 'summit', 'valley' and 'lake', giving very good explanations of their meaning. They were all very enthusiastic about the subject and were confident about writing persuasive tourist leaflets, where the teacher had drawn out literacy links well. On questioning the pupils, it was found that many had a very good knowledge of mountain geography and were also able to link scientific facts related to altitude to their answers. In a Year 3 class, pupils also displayed good progress in their knowledge of maps and atlases, much of which was gained from the highly motivating 'World Tour' project.
92. Good progress can also be identified in history where the pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning is often extensive. Much of this stems from their very good attitude to learning and in many cases the motivation of first hand experience. In classes where history teaching was observed there was evidence of the understanding of chronology and relating to events, people and changes in the past. In one Year 5 lesson pupils were learning about the pastimes of Victorian children. This learning had already been made clear to them from their visit, dressed in role, to a Victorian classroom set up at Horton Kirby. They were able to empathise with children of those days through their role-play. They easily identified the games that Victorian children played, having excellent knowledge of their construction and use. Pupils all attained the learning objective and were able to carry out the task of deciding similarities and differences with modern games with ease. The lesson was expanded to include the making of a spinner, giving a cross-curricular link to DT and science.
93. The teaching seen in geography and history lessons was mainly good. The teaching was not to the required standard where a new supply teacher's knowledge and understanding were poor and lesson planning was not satisfactory. In good lessons teachers' planning was detailed and their subject knowledge secure. The pace of the lesson was quick and kept the pupils engaged. A variety of strategies and activities were used to motivate learning. SEN pupils were supported well by the class teacher and teaching assistant to ensure good progress. In one class the teacher used her knowledge of a game that she had learned as a child using 5 stones. The class applauded spontaneously. Teachers make good uses of resources available to them,

especially the use of secondary source material. The work output of the pupils is good but in some cases would benefit from a longer session for independent work.

94. Management of both subjects is good overall. There are policies and programmes of study produced to cover the curriculum satisfactorily. There is evidence of cross-curricular links, especially with English. Co-ordinators monitor the work of teachers and carry out work scrutiny to ensure quality control. Pupil self-assessment is being carried out as well as end-of-unit assessment tasks. The management of both subjects has improved since the last inspection. The co-ordinators have, in their monitoring of their subjects, identified areas for development such as ensuring that history is inclusive; reviewing its planning and programmes of study; auditing geography resources such as Ordnance Survey maps; and the key area of developing ICT within both subjects, which is, justifiably, a priority. Both subjects contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

95. Standards in ICT are in line with national expectations and improving. In some areas standards are above those seen in most schools; for example, multi-media presentation in Year 6 and databases in Year 3. By the time pupils leave the school they know quite a lot about using spreadsheets as a mathematical modelling tool, which they start in Year 5. They find their way easily and confidently about the internet, use CD-ROMs and send e-mails, which they start in Year 3. In putting together a multi-media slide-show, they demonstrate knowledge and understanding of several different pieces of software covering titles, graphics and word-processing, and are quickly developing the skills to combine these different programs. They can construct a sequence of instructions in Logo to manipulate the movement of a robot, and can do this with a screen-version to draw regular polygons. Year 5 pupils can model graphically, being able to draw regular figures, resize them, change their shape, rotate and translate them. Year 4 pupils use a painting program to produce symmetrical designs and repeating patterns, supporting art and mathematics. They use screen Logo but are not yet using the 'repeat' function to make it less tedious. They use desktop publishing to produce a travel brochure. Year 3 pupils can use all the main functions of word processors and are starting to use computers to organise and manipulate information and print results in graphical form. All pupils make very good progress from a low starting point.
96. Teaching and learning are very good. Six lessons were observed, of which three were good and three were very good. Teachers are confident because they have very good subject knowledge, relationships with pupils and skills of class management. All teachers have had the training offered by the New Opportunities Fund, and work hard to make sure that they keep up-to-date and learn the subject's often quite tricky ins-and-outs. They are greatly helped by the very knowledgeable technician, who also doubles as a teaching assistant in lessons, showing pupils how to undo their mistakes. Pupils are confident because they know that mistakes will lead only to learning, and that they will always get it right in the end. Since they are used to taking the initiative and being responsible, they welcome the opportunity to learn by doing, and work hard in an atmosphere of almost tangible enjoyment. The expertise of the most able and most confident is used well when they are partnered with less-able pupils, so the needs of pupils with SEN are catered for well. The teamwork ethos ensures that pupils help each other. The SENCO and teaching assistants often help in ICT lessons, so there are always enough adults to answer questions when the pupils are doing practical work in pairs. Almost all pupils are confident at 'having a go', and enjoy coming to the front of the class during

introductory sessions to work with the 'smartboard'. This includes pupils with SEN, who volunteer willingly to join in and to demonstrate things as well as to answer questions.

97. The headteacher is the caretaker-manager of the subject, and a co-ordinator is to be appointed this summer. Although he is not an ICT expert, the headteacher is helped by the technician and members of the teaching staff who have more subject expertise. As a result, subject management is very good. The government recommended curriculum and assessment procedures are used well to challenge each pupil and ensure very good achievement. The headteacher monitors lessons, teachers' planning, pupils' work and progress, and the necessary training of teachers. Accommodation is good, with a very attractive, welcoming and well-used ICT suite. Resources are also good, especially the new smartboard and projector. The rate of improvement of standards is increasing as teachers use this facility more. The computer suite is used well, and the technician is essential in ensuring not only that everything works, but also that pupils are supported both inside and outside lessons. He runs the computer club, which supports and extends the curriculum well. Resources would be very good if the school had more software to support other subjects. An item on the school improvement plan is to make more use of ICT in other subjects, and the inspection team endorses this.

## **MUSIC**

98. Too few lessons were seen to make overall judgements on attainment. However, standards in singing are above national expectations. Pupils sing enthusiastically and in tune during assemblies, expressing words clearly and showing good control of pitch and volume. This is because the newly-appointed subject co-ordinator has high expectations and has taught pupils well during hymn practices. The musical life of the school has improved significantly due to her enthusiasm, talent and commitment. For instance, the Christmas music club and recorder club run by the co-ordinator are well attended and enhance the musical opportunities and standards of those pupils involved. An open afternoon introducing individual lessons in specific instruments such as guitar or clarinet created a lot of enthusiasm, with pupils being given the chance to try different instruments. All pupils have now been offered the opportunity to have peripatetic music lessons with teachers from the 'Music for Schools Foundation' from September. At present only one pupil in Year 6 has trumpet lessons.
99. All pupils are fully included in the lessons and pupils with SEN or English as an additional language made similar satisfactory progress to the other pupils in observed lessons. Pupils now have the language to describe different aspects of music such as the melody, mood, pitch and rhythm because teachers provide them with the appropriate vocabulary. Pupils know the names of various musical instruments. Music contributes well to their cultural development because good links are made to other subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils considered the lyrics from "When I'm Sixty Four," and discussed how the lives of men and women have changed since the 1960s.
100. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Teachers manage pupils very well and this means that pupils concentrate well and work hard at the tasks provided. Music is taught by the co-ordinator who is a music specialist and by class teachers. However, the standard of teaching in the co-ordinator's class is significantly higher than in other classes where the teachers' subject knowledge is sufficient to teach basic musical skills and knowledge but

insufficient to extend pupils' creative abilities. Year 3 pupils in the coordinator's class make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of rhythm and their ability to play a rhythm on an untuned instrument because the teacher uses highly effective teaching methods. Pupils worked very creatively, practising different rhythms in various chants such as "Salt, vinegar, mustard, pepper" in groups. Pupils took on the role of conductor and very successfully performed their work using musical instruments at the end of the lesson.

101. Leadership and management of music are good. The co-ordinator has made a very good start in monitoring the subject. She recognises the need to improve teachers' subject knowledge and has begun to address this through staff meetings and providing ideas for musical activities in lessons. Plans for her to teach lessons alongside other teachers should lead to further improvements because teachers are keen to succeed and the co-ordinator has a wealth of expertise to share. Schemes of work written by the subject co-ordinator ensure that pupils receive a good range and balance of musical activities which are particularly relevant to their interests. Resources are satisfactory but there is still a need to increase the range of CDs and multi-cultural instruments. Good assessment arrangements have been introduced but the use of information from this is still at an early stage of development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

102. Too few lessons were seen to make an overall judgement on attainment or progress. However, standards in swimming are above national expectations because the school benefits from its own swimming pool and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' attainment. Discussion with pupils and teachers indicate that attainment is likely to be above average in athletics and dance.
103. Only one swimming lesson in Year 3 and one athletics lesson in Year 4 were seen so no overall judgement can be made on teaching and learning. Teaching and learning in the athletics lesson were satisfactory. The teacher had good subject knowledge and managed pupils well, but insufficient use was made of pupils to demonstrate skills. Pupils were enthusiastic and enjoyed their lessons, co-operating well in pairs or small groups. They worked hard to improve their performance because teacher expected them to evaluate their own learning. Pupils have a good understanding of the health and safety issues surrounding different sports activities. Extra-curricular activities such as the netball, badminton and athletics clubs, and taking part in the Medway Swimming Festival, contribute well to pupils' learning. Year 6 pupils also have the chance to participate in adventurous activities such as orienteering.
104. The PE curriculum strongly supports pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' achievements in sport are celebrated as a reflection of the very real effort and commitment required in pursuing a personal talent. Even so, the team-player spirit is promoted and this means that pupils understand the importance of competing against themselves as well as others. For instance, a Year 6 pupil who had been the Year 5 high jump champion commented, "I want to beat my personal best. I'm not bothered about beating anyone else." The dance curriculum provides very good provision for cultural development as pupils learn different English country dances as well as dancing to music from other cultures. The quality of their work is good because they perform dances as part of special celebrations such as May Day. This provides the incentive to perform dances with fluency and precision.

105. The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator provides very clear direction and the extra curriculum time given to PE reflects the importance given to the subject in promoting the aims and values of the school. This is achieved very well through the good quality scheme of work. Monitoring of the subject is thorough and ensures that a full range of experiences is provided. Appropriate areas for improvement are identified and managed very well. Assessment procedures are good. Resources are good. The playing fields are spacious and enable a wide range of team games and sports to take place. The school recognises the need to replace old and worn mats and the £3,000 needed to provide a new liner for the swimming pool has been raised.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

106. Standards in Year 6 are generally in line with the expectations of the Medway locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions is better than their learning from religion because teachers are more confident teaching this aspect of the curriculum. All pupils make good progress because the co-ordinator uses her expertise to plan an interesting and varied scheme of work which is relevant to the needs of pupils. All pupils have good access to the curriculum. For example, pupils in each year group learn about Christianity as well as another major religion such as Judaism, Sikhism or Islam. By Year 6, pupils have developed a reasonable understanding of the beliefs, practices and lifestyles of different religious groups because good use is made of the multi-faith community within the school. They know the meaning of various symbols in religion. For example, pupils consider symbols of Christianity in the 'Mystic Nativity' painting by Botticelli. However, they are less confident in expressing their own views about puzzling aspects of life.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan interesting activities which build on pupils' own experiences, such as when Year 4 pupils talked about their own family rituals before learning about how Sikhs worship at home. This ensures that pupils actively participate in activities and make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because the intended learning is made clear at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers manage behaviour very well and pupils have a good understanding of how to behave. Teachers make effective links with literacy by encouraging pupils to read and write carefully. Pupils are taught the meaning of specific vocabulary such as 'Torah' or 'intangible' and this has helped to raise standards by enabling them to discuss religious ideas more effectively. A Year 4 pupil wrote, "God talks to people when they are nervous and scared." This contributes well to their spiritual development. Pupil attitudes to RE are good and suggestions from pupils are usually listened to carefully by peers. The subject also provides good support for pupils' moral development, such as when Year 3 pupils placed the ten commandments in order of importance and justified their decisions.
108. RE is managed well. The subject coordinator has a clear vision for the development of the subject and a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Standards of teaching and learning are well monitored. Assessment procedures are good and used consistently in all classes. However, providing guidance for staff on assessing standards in RE has been correctly identified in the subject development plan. A good level of resources including artefacts is well organised to support teaching. This ensures that pupils have first-hand experience of important objects in a range of religions. Visits to Rochester Cathedral and local churches, as well as visits made by representatives of different religions, further enhance the curriculum. Although the internet is used effectively to look around places of worship such as a mosque, the use of ICT in RE is still at an early stage of development.

